# Short Stories.

No. 735.] Week ending January 31st, 1903. [Price One Penny.

*So engrossed were they in each other, that they did not hear the sound of a match being drawn sharply across a rough surface, nor see the thin tongue of flame that stole upward from Molly's dress.*

(A Powerful Incident from our Story, "The Heiress of Studely Chase." See inside.)

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# SHORT STORIES

No. 735. Week Ending Jan. 31st, 1903. One Penny.

## The Heiress of Studely Chase.

### How a Man Yielded to a Woman's Temptation.

*Telling of the Incident shown on the Cover.*

"MOLLY!"

No answer.

"Molly!" in a higher key,

Still silence.

"Molly! *Molly Craven!*"—very sharply.

Molly jumped.

"I beg your pardon, Stella. Did you speak to me?"

"I did. Three times. I was about to offer you a penny for your thoughts, but, judging by your deep abstraction and that dreamy smile, they are evidently priceless."

"On the contrary, dear Stella, I offer them to you gratis. I was thinking of—The Ball"—very gleefully and in large capitals.

"Ah, yes, your first ball. You won't think so much of balls when you have been out a few years. But everything is fresh to you," added Miss Fitzgerald rather enviously.

It was the witching hour of twilight, tea had just been brought in, and dishes of bon-bons and cakes such as girls love, stood ready; Molly's aunt and chaperon slumbered peacefully on a distant sofa, and everything invited confidences. The two girls drew closer together and began to chat.

"Isn't it dear of grandfather to give this ball for my birthday?" exclaimed Molly. "I do think I am a lucky girl to have such a grandfather, though, of course, it's sad to be an orphan."

"I don't know," said Stella, thoughtfully, as she nibbled a bon-bon. "I rather wish I were a well-provided-for orphan."

"Oh, Stella!"

"Well, I haven't anything against the pater and mater exactly, except their madness of a quarter of a century ago when they married and brought up a large family on nothing, but the lot of an orphan in your circumstances rather appeals to me."

"Oh, Stella!" repeated Molly.

"My dear, you don't know what it is to be poor," returned Stella. "I do. We haven't enough to pay our way. In fact, we don't pay our way. And if you saw the ridiculous sum which the pater sportively calls my dress allowance, you'd wonder how I manage to appear decently garbed."

"But you dress so very handsomely," observed Molly, looking at her guest's elaborate tea-gown. "Something simpler might——"

"Sweet simplicity and white muslin are all very well for you," snapped Stella; "but they don't suit me."

*All rights reserved.*]

The two girls were certainly very different in style, yet both possessed no ordinary amount of beauty. Molly was fair, with sunny locks, a roseleaf complexion, and velvety brown eyes, a dainty little creature all softness and fluffy whiteness, fresh and sweet as a moss rosebud.

Stella was tall, and her figure had the full maturity of womanhood. Her eyes were blue, black-fringed, and of extraordinary brilliancy. Her complexion was equally brilliant, her mouth like a scarlet geranium bud, and her hair of midnight darkness, rippled in rich natural waves over her well-shaped head.

"Yes," she continued, after a pause; "it's terrible for people in our position to be poor, and that is why I am so sorry for your cousin Edgar. He is wretchedly poor for a man in his position, and, I suppose, will never be better off, as you are your grandfather's heiress, and Edgar will only inherit the barren title. It seems hard."

"It may seem so," replied Molly coldly; "but you must remember that Edgar is only a very distant cousin, while I am the only child of my grandfather's only child. But, really, this is not a subject——"

"Talk of angels," interrupted Stella, as a strikingly handsome man entered the room; "here he comes. And Sir Gilbert, too. Ah, and Mr. Le Marchant."

Mrs. Verinder woke at this moment, and tea and conversation became general until the party dispersed to dress for dinner.

Molly was the first down, looking very fair and sweet in her simple white gown, and she went into the conservatory where she had a favourite nook sheltered behind a magnificent palm; there she sank down on the luxurious lounge, to indulge in a delicious day dream. A step roused her, and she looked up, her heart thrilling with joy, but it was not Paul Le Marchant; it was her cousin Edgar.

"All alone, Molly?" he said, coolly taking a seat at her side.

"I like to be alone," replied Molly, not very graciously, but at eighteen it is difficult to conceal one's feelings, and Molly wanted that seat left vacant for another man.

Edgar took no notice of the hint, but went on to ask his cousin to promise him the first dance at her birthday ball on the following night, a request she reluctantly granted. A short silence followed.

"I wish," began Edgar after a pause; "I wish, Molly——" and there he stopped.

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"Yes?" put in Molly abstractedly, listening to some sound in the distance. Surely that was Paul's step.

"We have always been good friends, Molly," Edgar began again. "I have always enjoyed my visits to the Chase, and looked forward to seeing my dear little cousin. Sir Gilbert has always been kind to me, and I am sure he would be pleased if the earnest wish of my heart were granted, and my little cousin became my wife. Do you think, darling, you could learn to love me?"

"I'm quite sure I couldn't," answered Molly heartlessly. "But I'm very much obliged, and all that, of course."

Edgar looked rather taken aback, but urged his suit in impassioned language which left Molly quite unmoved.

"I am very sorry, indeed I am, if you really feel unhappy," she said, with perfect composure; "but I don't love you, and I could not possibly marry you. And I don't believe you love me either, although you say so. I *feel* you don't."

"I do love you, but perhaps I am too late; perhaps that fellow Le Marchant——"

"Not another word," cried Molly, very pale, and with a certain childish dignity that sat oddly on her cherub face. "I will not hear you. I don't love you; I don't even like you; and I don't believe you are a good man." And here her dignity broke down in a burst of tears, and she fled. She stumbled headlong into the arms of Paul Le Marchant, coming to find his little hostess in her favourite nook, behind the palm where he had had many a quiet chat with her already.

"My darling, my own Molly," he exclaimed, losing his head in his distress at her affliction. "Don't cry, my sweet, I can't bear it. Only tell me what is wrong. What has happened? Why were you crying?"

"I don't know at all," answered Molly, looking up radiant through her tears, and Edgar Craven went as completely out of her mind as if he had never existed. "I think—because I'm so happy, dear Paul."

For just as she knew that Edgar did not love her, no matter how strongly he protested his passion, Molly knew that, though he had never told her so, Paul Le Marchant loved her. He pressed her to his heart.

"My darling," he whispered; "I have loved you since I first saw you, but you were so young, just entering society, and I felt I ought not to speak until you had seen the world and learnt to know your own heart. But now—shall I ask your grandfather for you, Molly? I will go now, at once."

"And I will go with you," declared Molly valiantly; "grandfather never refuses *me* anything."

Left alone, Edgar Craven stood stroking his long drooping moustache absently and reflectively.

"Awkward," he murmured; "very awkward. Well, that little scheme's at an end. Little fool! But she wasn't fool enough to believe me. I didn't make love convincingly, I expect. It's uphill work making love to the wrong girl. Ah, if my glorious Stella had been in her place!"

After dinner, Mrs. Verinder and Sir Gilbert sat down to a game at chess, Molly and Paul Le Marchant went boldly to look at a new plant in the conservatory, and Miss Fitzgerald shortly afterwards disappeared. Edgar thought he knew where to find her, and was successful in his search. Stella was pacing up and down the picture-gallery, holding a blue paper in her hand and looking very worried. She smiled as she saw Edgar, and allowed him to join her in her walk.

"It's so cool here," she said, "and I like to walk among all these dead and gone Cravens. They look as if they never had had a care. Oh, to be the heiress of Studely Chase! Oh, to be without care and worry!"

"What is it that worries you so?" he asked.

"Bills; want of money; debts," she said. "I owe—oh, I don't know what I owe. And my dressmaker is pressing me for something on account, at least; and I have nothing. I've been unlucky at cards, too. My only chance is——"

"To marry a rich man," Edgar put in, as she paused. "I love you, Stella, but I am poor."

"I know it," she said quietly, "and I love you, but I can only marry a rich man."

"And Molly, the heiress of Studely Chase, stands between me and riches. I shall never be a rich man."

"If Molly were to die," began Stella softly, "has Sir Gilbert the power to choose another heir?"

"Failing Molly, I am next in succession," he answered shortly, "and Sir Gilbert has no power to leave the estate away from me. And he is seventy-nine."

Their eyes met.

"If we were in a novel," went on Stella, in the same soft voice, "you would manage to get rid of her—*somehow*."

"It would hardly work in real life," returned Edgar lightly. "I don't care to risk the gallows."

"But there are—*accidents!*" came the soft whisper.

Edgar stopped suddenly and the two stood looking at each other.

"For instance?" he asked, after a silence.

"Let us suppose we are writing a novel," Stella answered. "We want to get rid of a woman who stands between the happiness of two of the other characters. It would be easy enough in a novel. She might be thrown from her horse, or catch small-pox, or be drowned skating, or——"

"Yes?" breathlessly.

"I read in the papers some time ago," said Stella, with seeming irrelevance, "of a man who lit his pipe on the top of a 'bus and threw the match, still alight, carelessly away. It fell on a lady's bonnet and set fire to it. Had it not been for the presence of mind of a passer-by, who extinguished it, the woman would have been burnt to death."

"Well?" said Edgar, as Stella again paused.

"We might work that incident—into our novel. The girl to be removed might be at a dance in a dress of filmy chiffon, a most inflammable material. She might be sitting talking to a partner—say, on the stairs—and some man, lighting a cigar, might throw the match aside. It might lodge in her dress, quite by accident, of course, and the way to happiness for the other two is clear."

Edgar was deadly pale.

"Stella, it's too fiendish!" was all he said.

She turned away.

"Well, so let it be," she answered. "I have a headache, and am going to my own room."

But he caught her in his arms.

"Stella, Stella, I can't lose you!" he murmured; and she nestled to him.

"Think of all it means," she whispered, in a voice of beguiling sweetness. "Riches, luxury, beautiful Studely Chase, and *me*. She stands between you and all that. And she will marry Le Marchant, whom you hate, and reign here, mistress of all that might belong to you and me. Think, think, Edgar."

* * * * *

The night of the birthday ball had come. Studely Chase, that grand old mansion, was illuminated brilliantly, masses of flowers hid the walls of the ball-room, and were used profusely in all the rooms. It was a most successful ball, the guests agreed, and the heroine of the occasion, Sir Gilbert's grand-daughter, looked radiantly lovely.

Molly's pale green chiffon robes clung round her lissom form, her pearls, her grandfather's birthday gift, were exactly suited to her innocent childish beauty, her eyes shone like stars, her cheeks were each a lovely rose of happiness

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and excitement. She looked like some radiant vision from fairyland.

Stella Fitzgerald was as beautiful in a wonderful confection of amber silk, but she lacked the fresh, innocent air which was Molly's greatest charm.

The dance went on. Molly had danced the first, according to promise, with her cousin Edgar, and the next with Paul. There had followed a few duty-dances; and then came Paul's turn again.

"Let us sit this out, darling," he urged. "Let us go to our own little nook behind the great palm. The conservatory is pretty full; but I don't believe anyone has found out *our* seat."

No one had, for the seat was in a secluded corner, not easily found by those who did not know it. But Edgar knew his way to it, and soon followed them.

The young lovers were deep in that happy castle-building for the future, which is so sweet in the first dawn of love. They were too absorbed in each other to notice Edgar's approach.

Had Paul looked up he might have seen the white, set face behind the palm; but his eyes were fixed on Molly's sweet face, and he saw nothing else. He did not even hear the sound of a match drawn sharply across a rough surface, nor see the thin tongue of flame that stole upward from the soft, light material that lay on the ground behind Molly.

Suddenly—and never will Paul forget the sickening horror of that moment—Molly's face of innocent happiness changed to an expression of wild terror, and she sprang to her feet, a mass of flames which seemed to have burst forth as if by some infernal magic.

Maddened by pain and fear, the girl would have rushed past him, but he caught her and threw her down, tearing off his coat to throw over her, and trying to beat out the flames with his bare hands.

There was a great outcry, and the sound of hurrying feet, and women's screams, and the flames seemed mounting higher and higher, and Molly's struggles ceased and she lay very still. Then Paul was conscious that help was rendered and the fire extinguished, and then he staggered to his feet, sick and giddy, and looked down on Molly, lying motionless and unconscious.

"She is dead," he said dully; and then blackness seemed to swallow him up, and he fell forward in a deep swoon.

He had been very badly burnt on arms, shoulders, and hands, but he was not in any danger of losing his life. But Molly—bright, happy, pretty Molly, her grandfather's idol, her *fiancé's* priceless treasure, the worshipped heiress of Studely Chase—lay at the point of death. The house was hushed to solemn silence, while doctors and trained nurses took possession of it.

Stella Fitzgerald fled before the gloom to her own home; and Edgar Craven went abroad, both to await news of the success or failure of their plot with what patience they possessed, and to stifle what feelings of remorse they might chance to experience.

The doctors gave little hope, for the shock to the system had been very great, but though Molly went down to the very jaws of death, she did not die. Perhaps the great love of old Sir Gilbert and of Paul kept her in this world and would not let her go, for slowly, very slowly, she crept back to life, and one glad day the doctors proclaimed her out of danger.

It was a very slow recovery, for months elapsed before she was able to leave her rooms, and it was a warm, sweet day in June when she for the first time walked out in the park with her lover. A very little tired her, and she looked white and fragile as they returned to the house and sat down on the terrace where tea was to be served.

"Sir Gilbert has promised me that I shall carry you off to some more bracing air as soon as the doctors sanction it, my darling," said Paul, as he carefully placed her on the lounge put ready for her. "You are willing, aren't you?"

But Molly only smiled and blushed in answer. Sir Gilbert was just then coming along the terrace looking very grave, and holding some letters in his hand. After carefully preparing Molly for bad news he read aloud one of the letters, which was to the effect that Edgar Craven was dead, found shot through the head at Monte Carlo.

"You see it is thought to be a case of suicide," said Sir Gilbert, "for he had been losing heavily at the tables, and, in fact, was a ruined man. Curiously enough, the letter found on him which led to his identification was the letter from me, in which I told him you were rapidly recovering. Molly, darling, how ghastly you look! I ought not to have told you this."

"It isn't that!" she gasped. "At least, I'm sorry for poor Edgar, but—I never told you before—indeed, it went quite out of my head in all that dreadful illness, but it has come back to me now; it was Edgar set me on fire."

"*What?*" shouted both men.

"It was. As the flames shot up and I sprang to my feet, I half-turned round, and *I saw Edgar*. Even in that awful moment I knew he had done it. Why he did it I don't know at all, but I know he did it, and did it to kill me."

"He was my next heir," observed Sir Gilbert, "but it seems too fiendish to suppose that his motive."

"Yet it is the only conceivable motive," said Paul, as he drew his newly-recovered treasure closer to him, "unless he was mad. It was more like an action of madness than anything else."

But they never knew the part played by Stella Fitzgerald.

"Yes, he must have been mad," continued Paul, "and now that he has gone to his account we must try to forgive him. Let us forget him, my Molly, and think only of our own happiness. Shall you be able to travel in a month, sweetheart? May I have my wife with me by that time? Will you trust yourself to me then?"

And Molly laid her hand in his and answered very sweetly and simply—

"Yes, Paul; then, and always!"

**Vera Serkoff.**

## OUR COMING SERIAL.

**In a few weeks we shall start a new serial story of great dramatic power from the pen of Mr. R. Norman Silver, the author of "The Golden Dwarf," "Tales Told Off Duty," "The Brains of the Force," and other stories known to readers of this little paper. The new serial is quite the best thing Mr. Silver has yet turned out. Something more about it next week.**

**£5 a Week for Life!**

This is the

HUGE PRIZE OFFERED BY *PEARSON'S WEEKLY.*

*(For particulars, see page 148.)*

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# Footprints of Fire.

## THE STORY OF A LOVE THAT CAME OF SWEET CHARITY.

"I'm very sorry, Lyell, but it's impossible!"

"Impossible, man! Why?"

"I had rather not say, or, to put it another way—you, yourself know why as well as, or even better, than I do."

"A mare's nest, my boy! a mare's nest, and you've found it!"

"That's a matter of opinion; I've expressed mine."

"Well, Pierpoint, of course you are aware that you are throwing away a good thing. The boat is new-built; while, as her skipper, all you would have to do would be to quietly cruise in the neighbourhood of a certain part of the coast of Cuba till, well—till something occurs."

"It is just that something which prevents me from accepting your offer. I am willing to tackle most things, if only they are straight and above board; but when it comes to mixing myself up with shady foreign politics with the main idea of making a big profit out of both sides, why, you must excuse me. I'm not having any!"

"Very well, then! I thought to do you a good turn. With a brand-new master's certificate, it would have been a fine chance for you I should have thought, to have got a command at the start. It's your loss, not mine, that you think otherwise. I'd take the *Queen Mab* out myself if I wasn't tied here by business."

"Didn't know you held a ticket," said the other.

"Ah! you see you don't know everything, my dear Pierpoint. By the way, seen the fair Mabel lately?"

"No."

"Well, I have; and it will be news for you that through the death of that old half French uncle of hers, she has come in for an enormous sugar plantation in Martinique. As her father's heiress she was always prospectively wealthy, but now—there's no knowing what she is worth."

"Miss Stanhope's money is nothing to me," replied Harry Pierpoint hotly.

"*Miss* Stanhope!" said the other, with a provoking smile that was half a sneer. "Things are changed a bit, aren't they? I should think, too, that money would be particularly attractive to you just now, when you haven't overmuch of it to boast of."

"Look here, Lyell!" blazed out Pierpoint. "You're a big shipowner; I'm just a sailorman, without a ship. You're rich—I'm poor; but that doesn't give you the right to insult me!"

"I never supposed that it did."

"We've known each other since we were youngsters," went on the other, ignoring the interruption, "and I suppose that old acquaintance inclined you to give me the refusal of this precious Cuban job of yours. But there was no need to introduce Mabel Stanhope's name into the talk. Still, as you have mentioned it, and in such manner, I will just say that I consider you to have shown your hand with regard to her; and that I shall do my level best to win her, in spite of her money, and in spite of all you may do to prevent me. Good morning!"

"Conceited idiot!" snarled Cuthbert Lyell, as his visitor closed the door behind him; "he may say and do what he likes. I mean to have the handling of that West Indian property and also of Mr. Stanhope's not inconsiderable accumulations! The girl—well, she isn't a patch on that pretty New England Puritan I met at Scarborough two months ago. The rich young shipowner! If they only knew! Only a step from the Bankruptcy Court, and no salvation except in this Cuban privateering business. Once get that through, however, and possession of Mabel Stanhope's money-bags, then, hey for Rhode Island—Lettice Fairfax—and paradise!"

Ringing the hand-bell on his table sharply, the summons resulted in the entrance of the chief clerk.

"Oh, Carter, is the *Queen Mab* ready to out-dock on next tide, if necessary?"

"Yes, sir; and everybody's signed on now except the captain. You said you would arrange that."

"Quite right, Carter! quite right! I have arranged it! The skipper is found; and I am taking steps within the hour to see that my instructions are properly carried out. What is our balance at the bank?"

"About three thousand, sir. But that is wanted, you know, to-morrow, for Simpson's acceptances. You said you would transfer from your private account at Elyn Mills sufficient to replace that."

"So I will, Carter—this afternoon. Meanwhile, make out a cheque for two thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds and bring it to me to sign. I have a payment to make before one o'clock.

"I'll do it! Yes, I'll do it!" Cuthbert Lyell muttered to himself as the door closed on his subordinate. "I'll sail the *Queen Mab* myself! The game is played out here, anyway, and by going I can kill two birds with one stone—make my Cuban profit and be at Martinique when Mabel Stanhope arrives there to take possession of her inheritance!"

* * * * * * *

There was much excitement, and indeed, revolutionary agitation in Cuba about this time in connection with the election of a President.

Havana was in a turmoil from end to end; the Creole population and the American whites having very different ideas with regard to a State head. Contraband munitions of war were, therefore, purchased in Britain by the former in preparation for a probable, or at any rate, possible struggle.

Cuthbert Lyell had early intimation of the Creole requirements, and being absolutely destitute of moral principle, and in a hopeless state of financial difficulty, determined to fill his pockets by means at once dishonourable and cowardly.

With rifles and small guns that would burst at the first fire; with cartridges that were guiltless of lead; with swords that would buckle at the first blow, he planned to stow the *Queen Mab* to the Plimsoll line. He was to receive payment on his bills of lading before transhipment, so that, the last case over the side, he could steam away with impunity.

The risk was great, there was no doubt about that; but the gain was so much the greater in proportion that to such a desperate man as Lyell it outweighed all other considerations.

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The *Queen Mab*, a five hundred ton steam yacht, lay in Tilbury Dock, waiting only her skipper and sailing orders.

Lyell knew that Mabel Stanhope contemplated leaving for the West Indies, with her father's sister as companion, in the course of a few days; but it was only when he had definitely decided to sail his ship himself that something occurred to him which, from his point of view, could he only carry it out, would render his schemes with regard to the young heiress, surely and completely successful.

First dispatching a wire to the chief officer of the *Queen Mab*, he then drove in hot haste to Earl's Court, and asked for Mabel Stanhope.

"Miss Stanhope," he said, "it is in my power, I think, to be of service to you, if you will let me."

"It is very kind of you, Mr. Lyell; but how?"

"You leave almost at once, do you not, for Martinique?"

"Yes, at the end of the week."

"Have you taken your passage?"

"No; but my aunt and I propose doing so to-morrow morning."

"I am glad, because, as I have said, it enables me to be of service to you. For some time past a small steamer has been building for our firm for the West Indian branch of our business. Unable to secure a suitable commander for her, and wishing her to start on her maiden trip before the end of this present week, I have decided to take her out and home myself."

"Are you a sailor, Mr. Lyell? I should never have thought it!"

"Oh, yes; now, if you and Miss Stanhope will so far honour me as to accept a passage in my vessel, I shall be only too delighted, and will land you at St. Pierre as safely and in as good time as would the Royal Mail people."

"Of course it is very good of you, Mr. Lyell, and I should like it very much if I thought we should not inconvenience you in any way."

"How could that be?" he said, drawing a step nearer to her and speaking with an intensity the meaning of which she could not mistake, "seeing that the best that I can offer you would scarce be worthy of your acceptance or even of your consideration!"

Had Mabel Stanhope stopped to think she would probably have declined the proffered service; but, her aunt coming in at that moment, Lyell artfully addressed himself to her.

"Miss Stanhope," he said, with all the suave, respectful gentleness that elderly ladies so much appreciate, "I want to enlist your aid in persuading your niece to agree to a proposal that I have just made her."

The good soul, for the moment, let her thoughts run upon the only one sort of proposal having a supreme interest for her sex. Lyell soon undeceived her, however, his explanation of the position meeting with her unqualified approval.

"My dear," she said to Mabel, "it will be so much more pleasant being on a friend's ship; and as we can have everything ready in twenty-four hours there will be no difficulty."

"I leave the Thames for Harwich to-morrow morning on the ebb tide, and shall expect you to join us there the day after at noon. I shall be at the dock station to meet you."

Although he had succeeded in effecting his object, he could see that Mabel regarded both himself and his proposition with a certain amount of mistrust and hesitation: but he felt pretty sure that the old lady would innocently further his ends, and prevent any backing out, even at the last moment.

"That is all settled, then," he said, as he rose to go. "From Harwich we go to Rotterdam, where I am to take in a few stores, from there making a straight course for Martinique. Good-bye! or rather—*au revoir!* I will give orders at once to the steward to prepare a state room, and to make things as comfortable as we can for you."

"Aunt!" said Mabel. "I wish we were not going in this vessel. I don't like Mr. Lyell, I can't exactly say why, but I don't like him."

"My dear," said Miss Stanhope, with quiet insistence, "this is mere prejudice. Why shouldn't we accept a passage in a friend's ship. I should like to know? I do not say that Mr. Lyell is my idea of a nice sort of man, but that is no reason why you and I should not avail ourselves of his very opportune invitation."

There was nothing more to be said after that, and Mabel resigned herself to the inevitable.

* * * * *

As Cuthbert Lyell stands waiting on the Harwich platform the arrival of the London train, he more than once takes a letter out of his pocket, and reads it with evident disturbance of mind.

The letter was to the following effect—

"LYELL,—*From certain things that I heard at your office, where I called again in the afternoon, I gather that you have yourself gone as skipper of your boat. This, with the fact I have also learnt that Miss Stanhope and her niece are to travel with you to Martinique, is convincing proof to my mind that you have some devilry afoot, which has Mabel Stanhope for its object. Believing this, and knowing you, I hereby warn you that I am on your track, that Simpson's acceptances have this morning been publicly posted against you as forgeries; that you can never show yourself in the city of London again, and that should you seek the coercion of Mabel Stanhope for mercenary purposes, I will follow you step by step till I have linked you hand and foot to justice.* HARRY PIERPOINT."

"Confound the fellow! He hangs on like a bull-dog. But there, he can't by any possibility overhaul us before I have completed my little scheme."

At that moment the London train stood in the station.

"Quartermaster!" said Lyell, to a sailor in attendance. "Look after the ladies' baggage, and see that it is taken on board at once."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Ah, Miss Stanhope! Steam's up, and we haven't any time to lose. Miss Mabel, I have some news for you. You know Pierpoint—Harry Pierpoint?—well, he's had an awful accident! Fell off a gangway plank at the docks, and was crushed between the quay and the ship's side!"

At first he thought he had gone too far, for she stopped short and caught hold convulsively of her aunt's arm.

She did not speak, but looked at him with white face, and lips that trembled violently.

"Mr. Lyell! Is this really so?" said Miss Stanhope, distressfully. "We were so fond of Harry Pierpoint, surely he is not ——?"

"I fear so," replied the arch-liar. "My information has it that he died directly after being brought up out of the water. I feel it deeply myself, for he and I were schoolfellows, though never meeting much in after life."

Judging it best to get Mabel on board as soon as possible, Lyell whispered to Miss Stanhope that the stewardess would be the best one to look after her niece.

The old lady quite agreed with this, and when the *Queen Mab* had received her skipper and his guests, she soon moved out into the stream, and in obedience to the order of "Full steam ahead!" was in full run for the Scheldt and Rotterdam.

* * *

For obvious reasons Lyell had not stopped at Madeira, but had pushed on with all speed for Martinique.

It was on the nineteenth day from Rotterdam that the towering top of Mount Pelée appeared on the horizon.

From its summit rose a steady, fairly large column of smoke, while even at that distance there came on the wind a fine, impalpable grey dust, which settled on everything and everybody.

At any other time Lyell would have wondered, and been disturbed at this evidence of volcanic activity, but now his whole mind was bent on other things

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His first words to the pilot were significant of his fears.

"Has the Royal Mail come in?"

"Yes," said the pilot, "twenty-four hours ago, and left for Jamacia."

Lyell could only hope that his lucky star would shine for him, and that Pierpoint would not have come across the Atlantic to circumvent his plans.

After dinner he suggested that as soon as all the usual port formalities had been observed he should escort the ladies ashore the next morning before six o'clock, and see them safely bestowed in the Convent of Notre-Dame, at the village of Morne Rouge.

The good sisters were glad to be of service to the two Englishwomen, and Lyell promised to call the next day, and see how they fared.

But that call was fated never to be made.

* * * * *

St. Pierre, the chief town of Martinique, was situated on the lower slopes of the mountain, its tree-dotted streets extending right down to the shores of the bay.

In a small hotel down by the waterside, kept by a middle-aged creole couple, Harry Pierpoint, passenger from Southampton on board the Royal Mail steamer, *Orinoco*, sat watching out of a window a man coming towards the house, from the upper part of the town.

"There he comes! I will meet him and make him tell the truth about Mabel and her aunt."

As he swung out of the doorway into the street Lyell saw him, and saw also that there was no evading the man who, as he had threatened, had followed hard in his very footprints.

It was just about eight o'clock as the two men met face to face, but the words which were ready to spring to Pierpoint's lips were never uttered.

Suddenly the air became dark, a strange rumbling sound coming from the direction of the crater of Mount Pelée.

Faint flashes of flame, too, were visible through the ever-increasing volume of smoke.

"Save yourself!" shrieked Lyell, as the other got within almost touching distance of him. "The mountain has burst, there will not be a creature alive here in an hour!"

Not waiting to hear Pierpoint's reply, the fear-stricken schemer made at a frantic run for where he knew his boat to be waiting for him to take him off to the *Queen Mab*.

"Quick—quick!" he shouted to the two men at the oars.

Then it was that, turning his head, he saw through the gloom and shower of dust, Pierpoint racing to stop the boat from leaving.

"Stop! Lyell! Stop!" was borne on the wind. But it was too late.

As the exhausted pursuer reached the spot Lyell gave a powerful push with the boat-hook, and the two men laying with a will to their oars, the boat was soon well on its way towards the little steamer.

"The *Queen Mab* was lying well in-shore, so that the distance to travel being but small, Lyell was on board in less than ten minutes.

His feet had barely touched the deck when, with a belching roar that shook earth and sea for miles around, the mountain burst on the side nearest the bay, and poured forth a death-dealing cloud of smoke, ashes, flames and dust that in a moment dealt ruin to the town, wiping out, at a stroke, forty thousand human souls.

Nearly every ship in the harbour was sunk at her moorings; the *Queen Mab*, overwhelmed with hundreds of tons of fine dust, being the first to disappear.

The Cubans would not now get their "faked-up" weapons of war, while Cuthbert Lyell would assuredly never receive the reward of his fraudulent scheme.

When the morning broke all that was visible of the yacht *Queen Mab* were the trucks of her topmasts, and the dead body of its owner washed hither and thither between them on the swell.

* * * * *

The nuns at the convent at Morne Rouge did not, as a rule, admit men within their walls, but, at the earnest intreaty of Mabel Stanhope they consented to receive and nurse back to life, Harry Pierpoint, whom Mabel, in company with two of the sisters, had found crushed, burnt, and half dead, in a niche under the walls of the Cathedral.

How he had escaped instant death was a marvel, but, as he related later on to Mabel, the depth of the recess must have protected him from the terrible shower.

Everyone knows that the side of the island where lies the village of Morne Rouge, escaped the devastating hand, so that the nuns were able to go out in parties and succour where succour was needed.

To Mabel was left the bringing back to life of Harry Pierpoint.

It was weeks before he could realise that the gentle, tender-handed vision by his bedside was indeed the one whom at home he had worshipped at a distance.

As for Mabel, she learnt, while ministering to his wants, the true love which comes sometimes with the pitifulness of sweet charity.

Long before he could sit up he had told her all his heart, and she—she gave him that which she had found—the love of her life.

One day she told him that the great inheritance which she had come to see and to take possession of, had, in a moment of time, as it were, been swept away, burnt up, and buried out of sight for ever.

"Don't be angry with me when I say that I am glad," he said. "I am but a poor man, and you were more than rich enough already before this other matter fell to you. You it is that I want, not your money."

"Really me?" she said, smiling down happily upon him.

"Yes, darling, really you, and only you!"

* * * * *

Harry Pierpoint and his wife, Mabel, never by any chance speak of the ill-fated owner of the *Queen Mab*. And it is best so.

The nearest reference to the subject that the former ever permitted himself, was when he once likened the marks he had left in the earth of a certain memory to "footprints of fire."

**E. Ralph.**

# WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH £5 A WEEK FOR LIFE?

## 10 Gramophones for S.S. Readers.

IT is not everyone who can afford to buy a piano, or even a musical instrument of any sort, and to such persons a Gramophone—which is another name for a talking and singing machine—would be a much-prized gift.

Each Gramophone we are giving away is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box which greatly increases the volume of sound.

You can win a Gramophone by stating on the back of a post-card—in not more than fifty words—what you would do with the sum of £5 a Week for Life—which, as everyone now knows, is a prize being offered by *Pearson's Weekly* in a competition.

A Gramophone will be given to each of the ten readers whose method of using the money is considered best.

Post-cards only must be used, and they should be addressed to the LIFE EDITOR, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C., to arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, February 3rd.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

# Ancient and Modern;

OR,

## THE OLD CHEST AND THE YOUNG LADY.

THE chief occupations of Mr. Raymond Spencer were the pursuit of his hobby for collecting antiquities and receiving and reciprocating the attentions of the young ladies of his rather extensive circle of friends and acquaintances.

He had gathered together many curiosities from various parts of the globe and of different periods, and the mere mention of something ancient was sufficient to deprive him of rest till he had seen it and made an attempt to acquire it. Being possessed of a fair income, he could afford to indulge his hobby to a considerable degree.

Raymond Spencer was one of those men who have the power of attracting the other sex. If he were at a county ball, he obtained the best partners, for he was a good dancer and his manner was irresistible; and if he were at any other society function, he was the ladies' man *par excellence*. His detractors said they could see nothing in him but conceit; if there was really nothing in him, then it must have been his very conceit that carried him through so triumphantly. Certainly he had a marvellously good opinion of himself, and never doubted his ability to win over the members of the opposite sex.

"I do not intend to marry yet," he remarked on one occasion confidentially to a friend. "Unless," he added, "a really good chance should offer itself!"

From this it will be seen that he anticipated no difficulty in capturing the heart and the hand of any lady upon whom his critical choice might fall.

At length he met Miss Owen-Williams and his choice fell upon her. She was young, pretty, rich (which was not the least attraction) and she had a liking for antiquities. Raymond Spencer sat down one evening and deliberately thought the matter out; he arrived at the decision that she would suit him and that he would take the necessary steps to secure her.

Miss Owen-Williams, however, was not so easy to conquer as he had imagined, and he was vexed at his progress; he hardly knew whether she encouraged his advances or not. At the end of a month he learnt that she was returning to her married sister's mansion on the Welsh coast, and he resolved to follow her. Without properly considering his words, he announced to her that—by a strange coincidence!—he had been making arrangements for a stay of four or five weeks quite near to the spot she had mentioned, so he hoped to meet her at the houses of mutual friends in the neighbourhood.

He found little difficulty in obtaining rooms at a good hotel, and it was just as easy for him to secure invitations to various houses, for (as already mentioned) he had many friends and acquaintances.

He made many excursions on foot in the vicinity in the hope of meeting Miss Owen-Williams alone, and thus getting an additional chance of making progress in her favour. He succeeded two or three times, and after a fortnight, he congratulated himself on making headway. She was more pleasant when he met her in society, and she seemed even more agreeable when they chanced to meet during a walk.

It was during one of those excursions that he made a discovery which divided his attention. He was passing a small, rather out-of-the-way house—cottage would probably be a more fitting description — when, through an open door, he observed a big, strange-looking chest against the back wall of the room. It was an immense piece of furniture for that dwelling; it was quite out of place there; and it was of very ancient design and manufacture. The collecting instinct impelled him to enter the humble dwelling, to the surprise of the old woman and her daughter, who were seated at the farther side, sewing or knitting.

"I am very tired," he explained apologetically, "and I should be thankful for a cup of water and a rest. Would it be troubling you too much?"

The woman nodded hospitably; the girl looked confused. She was comely of form and not far removed from being pretty of feature, and she was conscious of the appreciative gaze of the newcomer.

"Certainly, good sir!" responded the dame, speaking with a slight accent. Turning to the girl, her mother uttered a few words in Welsh.

Raymond Spencer went to the chest and sat down on it without waiting for a formal invitation. The old dame looked a trifle hurt.

"This is a very old chest, madam," remarked Spencer, who was now able to get a better look at it.

"If you sit on that stool," replied the old woman, pointing to a rough piece of furniture, "you will be able to appreciate the beauty of the chest still more!"

Spencer concluded that she did not like him to sit on the chest, and this was not a good sign from his point of view. She would not be so much inclined to part with it. He did as she suggested, drawing the stool close to the chest and examining it carefully. It was of oak, with heavy metal bindings along the edges and at the corners; the metal parts were ornamented with carvings some of which were undoubtedly heraldic designs. It had no lock, but had evidently been originally fastened by some kind of padlock, now lost.

It was a massive thing; it had clearly existed for centuries and was likely to endure for several more. Raymond Spencer's eyes sparkled at the thought of having found this treasure; it was worth a lot of money, but no doubt the old dame could be tempted into parting with it for five pounds. That sum would be a small fortune to her.

So engrossed was he in the examination of the chest that he did not notice that the girl had brought him a glass of milk. He excused himself in his most courtly fashion, and took the glass with a profusion of thanks, whereat the maiden blushed and looked happy.

"This chest must be quite one hundred years old, madam," he said artfully as he sipped the milk, "and it must be in your way. Would you be willing to dispose of it? I daresay I

could get £5 for it, which would enable you to buy a nice neat piece of furniture to take its place."

"What!" gasped the dame in her native tongue. "You want me to sell *that?* And for £5! Why, it has been n our family for centuries—not for one century, but many!" Then she remembered that her guest could not understand and she replied to his offer in English, but in a milder tone, the first flush of indignation having worked itself out. "No! I cannot sell it! It goes with the family, sir. It has been handed down from father to eldest son all the time, but I have no son, so it will go to Maria when she marries! I cannot sell it!"

"Just as a fancy price," said Raymond Spencer with affected unconcern, "I would give ten pounds, but that is a high figure. Ten pounds! That would buy a lot of things!"

He was pretending to examine the chest as he spoke, but he kept a watch on the woman's face from the corner of his eye. She shook her head determinedly, so he decided to say nothing more for the present. After chatting a while with them, and principally with the girl, he left the cottage, after asking permission to call again to look at the chest.

"It requires a little scheming, that's all!" murmured Raymond Spencer as he trudged along towards his hotel. "Antiquities and girls are much alike; make up your mind to have either the one or the other, and you're sure to win. That is, if you possess the necessary qualities that are demanded in such circumstances, as I do!"

It will be noted from this remark that his conceit had not diminished.

Miss Owen-Williams was not so agreeable that evening, but Raymond was not dismayed; he would win in the end. If he could get hold of that chest, it would help him in his love suit, for Miss Owen-Williams was proud of her descent from the princely families of Wales and this fact, coupled with her love of the ancient, would make the chest an attraction. He pictured to himself how nicely it would fill one nook in the house he intended to furnish lavishly—partly with her money—when he was married to her, and he smiled every few minutes with self-satisfaction.

He made his way to the cottage earlier in the day, on the morrow of his first visit, and found Maria alone. That was a piece of good fortune and he made the most of his opportunity.

"You wish to see the chest again?" asked the girl, and she blushed when he answered: "Yes, the chest and *you!*"

He sat down on the stool and she sat by his side, replying to his questions. They had no papers to prove the authenticity of the age of the chest, Maria told him, but the tradition handed down from generation to generation was to the following effect:

The chest had been the property of Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, the last of the Welsh Princes of Wales, who was killed in a chance encounter with an English knight in 1282. The chest had passed into the possession of a distant relative of Llewelyn, and had changed owners many times since that date, passing through the hands of great Welsh families and finally, about two hundred years ago, into her father's family. The heraldic designs were said to be those of Llewelyn and of other families, but she (Maria) did not know one from another.

Spencer was perfectly satisfied that it was a rare treasure and he intended to possess it; he could not keep away from the cottage, but paid visits whenever he believed that Mrs. Pritchard was out. Maria and he became great friends and he took several tracings and rubbings of the carvings on the wood and metal.

The time he had intended to stay had expired, but he was located at a house in the neighbourhood. Miss Owen-Williams resided there during the greater part of the year, so he could pursue two objects at once time.

They sat side by side on the stool, looking at the chest.

He was passing out of the Pritchard cottage one afternoon when he saw Miss Owen-Williams and a Welsh peasant talking together. They parted as he came in sight, the lady going in the opposite direction and the man walking towards Spencer and the cottage. Raymond was perplexed for a moment, but he returned the man's civil "Good morning" and explained the meeting by telling himself that Miss Owen-Williams doubtless knew the man by reason of his being a tenant on the estate or something of that kind.

He turned and looked back, just in time to see the man enter the Pritchard dwelling, and then an idea struck him. He might be Maria's lover! He, Raymond, had flirted with the silly girl in order to get all possible information out of her, and to win her over to the idea of selling the chest. She might be able to influence her mother in time. Maria herself was not averse to selling it. Now, if that man were her future husband, or likely to be, he must be conciliated.

"I must get on the right side of him, get them married, and then induce both to brave the old lady's anger and sell me the chest! That's the plan. No more flirting with Maria! I must pay a little more attention to the lady over there, for she seemed a bit frigid last night, and I find from Lark and Mark's letter that my finances would be better if supported by her fortune!"

David was the lover's name and he worked at a hotel as a porter. Raymond was very pleasant to him and offered to help him. Maria appeared somewhat embarrassed when Raymond first surprised her in David's company, but he was so genial that her confusion quickly vanished.

Within a fortnight Raymond had completely conquered David, a simple, good-natured fellow, but he made no mention of the chest. David intended to marry as soon as he could get a better situation, and this gave Raymond the opportunity.

"It will be such fun to get Miss Owen-Williams to help me to get David Morgan a better post, and she can do it!" muttered Raymond in high glee. "It will be a regular round, and they will all play my game! She helps him into a situation; he thanks me, because I obtain her help. He lets me have the chest; the chest helps me to win her. Thus, she helps me to win herself! Funny, isn't it?"

The ceiling, which he was addressing, did not apparently see the joke, for its stony exterior did not wrinkle. But Raymond was highly pleased.

He spoke to Miss Owen-Williams about David Morgan. Yes, she knew him well, and the rest of his family; she would be happy to assist him, but how did Raymond know him? Raymond had to explain and he told half the story; he really gave himself a lot of trouble to enable David to marry, and the wedding took place very soon afterwards, much to Raymond's delight, for he was getting tired of the waiting.

"Now's my time!" said Spencer to himself, the day after the wedding. "I must approach David while his gratitude is warm. And I must finish my double business in this part of the country, for I've had enough of it."

David and his bride had hired a cottage some three miles away from Mrs. Pritchard, but their home was just as near for Raymond as the dwelling of Mrs. Pritchard. He knew that the coveted chest had been removed there, at his own suggestion. His heart beat high at the prospect of victory. At last!

"Good morning, David!" he saluted. "You seem very happy!"

"Thanks to my good friends, sir!" replied David gratefully.

"Well, David, as you acknowledge that I assisted you to happiness, you will not hesitate to do something that will give me the greatest pleasure."

"Not a moment, sir!" said David sincerely. "What can I do?"

"You have an old chest, given you by Mrs. Pritchard. It is of no use to you, and I should like to place it with my other treasures of that nature. Will you sell it to me for five pounds?" As he spoke he drew from his waistcoat pocket a £5 note and held it towards David.

The latter opened his eyes in wonder, and Raymond could scarcely repress a smile at the quick way in which the simple fellow was jumping at the bait.

"Well, now!" cried David, speaking slowly, "if I had known that you wanted it, I would have let you have it with pleasure, sir, but I never dreamt of it, so——"

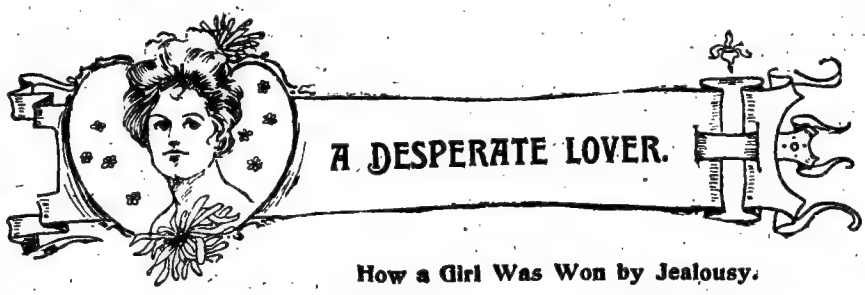
"What?" gasped Raymond, turning cold.

"Miss Owen-Williams gave me £10 for it only this morning! Mrs. Pritchard said she would agree to that, as the lady was descended from another great Welsh family. But," he added quickly, "I would readily have sold it to you, for all that, if I had known, for you have been so good! Miss Owen-Williams said I ought to thank you for your attentions to Maria and for your unselfish goodness—that was exactly what she said, sir, and she laid stress on the *unselfish*—in getting me that situation. She said that she hoped she would find a husband who was unselfish and not conceited enough to think that a woman could be bought or could be fascinated by his vanity. I don't know why she said that, but she did, and she told us that she was going away from the district for a time, as there was someone hereabouts she did not wish to see and perhaps that person would be gone when she came back!"

David prattled on innocently enough, not comprehending the effect of words.

Mr. Raymond Spencer escaped as soon as he could and left for home on the following morning, a wiser and less conceited man.

**H. Bramley.**



# A DESPERATE LOVER.

## How a Girl Was Won by Jealousy.

She entered a large jeweller's shop, and Bob, who had seen her from the opposite side of the street, crossed over and passed in immediately after her.

Stopping at the first counter he asked to see some diamond rings. He could see Gladys further down the shop, but she did not see him until he turned round as she was going out.

He called to her.

This was their first meeting since about two months before, when she had for the seventh time firmly, but gently, refused to marry him.

"Won't you help me select one?" he asked, nodding towards the tray of rings spread out over the showcase.

"Why, Bob," with a light laugh, "are you in earnest?"

"Certainly. You know I'm — er — aw — well, you know."

"Is it an engagement ring? Oh, do tell me about it! Who is she and——"

"Here is her picture," and he produced a photograph from his pocket. "But I don't believe you know her."

"Oh, isn't she pretty!" she cried, enthusiastically.

"Isn't she," agreed Bob.

"What pretty eyes! And what a sweet mouth."

"Of course."

"When is it to be?" she asked, after studying the picture intently for a moment.

"Oh, I'll tell you about it after awhile. Now, which of these rings do you think would be most suitable for the girl who would so honour me as to become my wife?"

She looked them over carefully, and finally holding one up to him said: "Take this one, Bob."

Gladys waited at the door while Bob paid for the ring.

"His wife!" she exclaimed under her breath. She was beginning to awaken now; to realise that he really was about to drop out of her life.

They had been friends for years. In their school days a friendship had sprung up which had lasted.

She had liked him better than any of the other boys. Did she regret to lose him now? She believed she did.

Bob joined her and they started down the street together. He held the ring in his hand, but she did not notice it.

Grasping her hand, he slipped it on her finger before she had time to resist.

"It's yours, Gladys," he said. "And you're mine."

She stopped and looked at him in astonishment.

"What is the matter with you to-day, Bob?"

"Don't you understand? You're to be my wife. Don't you see you're wearing the engagement ring?"

She flushed and stammered a little.

"But, Bob, that other girl? Aren't you going to marry her?"

"Only joking. That's my cousin's photo. I had just received it by post. You see, I was becoming desperate, and did this as a last resort."

"You think you are smart, don't you?"

"Then you refuse me again?"

"I didn't say that."

**R. L. Rogers.**

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# HOW I CHAPERONED BELINDA.

By Lady Peggy Carstairs.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

**LADY PEGGY CARSTAIRS.** A widow, who, having lost all her money in a bank failure, undertakes to chaperon Belinda.

**BELINDA NORTH.** The beautiful daughter of Hardy North, an Australian millionaire.

**DUKE OF EASTACRES.** A comparatively penniless suitor for Belinda's hand.

**DAVID CARR.** A young engineer, with whom Belinda is in love.

**STANLEY FORBES.** A famous barrister.

**SHEILA KENWYN.** Forbes' cousin, whom Eastacres has wronged.

**ALPHONSE HERVÉ.** An eminent French artist in love with Belinda.

**PRINCESS VERA ZOULOFF** A celebrated Russian beauty.

**BARON ROLLA.** An extremely wealthy Parisian, in love with Belinda.

## Carr in Vera's Clutches.

It was past midnight when, in response to her low-toned invitation, I entered Vera's room. She had returned from Wilborough about half past eleven; the dear Dean was old-fashioned and kept early hours, and, what was worse, insisted on his guests doing the same.

Vera was in a charming *negligée* of pale yellow silk, her dark hair curling in soft masses, fell below her waist. She looked very young and very lovely.

"He is charming, this David of yours, dear Peggy," she said softly.

"He has fire and fervour enough for a Russian almost. I find him quite to my taste."

I laughed in frank amusement, and drew a chair close to the fire—we burn fires all the time in our bedrooms except perhaps in the extreme heat of summer.

"And what of the poor young man himself?" I asked. "Is he already fascinated?"

The Princess shrugged her shoulders, and proceeded to light one of her special cigarettes.

"He is, I think, appreciative of my society." She leant back as she spoke, blowing clouds of perfumed smoke into the air.

"And"—I bent forward, resting my hand upon her knee—"how long?" I asked significantly.

The Princess closed her eyes, then with a little yawn and a stretch of her long white arm, she murmured softly:

"I think that David stays a week with the Dean—is that not so, dear Peggy?"

I nodded, and, declining the offer of a Russian cigarette, departed, well pleased with the progress of affairs.

Belinda was a little subdued for the first few days after she had dispatched her note to David. She glanced wistfully at her post each morning at the breakfast-table, hoping against hope that he would write and protest against her decision. Needless to remark he did not write; the Princess took care of that.

She kept him furnished with the latest gossip from Havilands, and as from the first she had spoken of Belinda with admiration and friendliness, he was inclined to give her statements full credence. He had not mentioned his attachment for Belinda to the Princess; neither, so Vera contrived to make him understand, had anybody else, it being a favourite speculation of hers as to whom "her sweet young friend" would eventually marry.

"Dearie," she said one evening to my charge, "you are behaving very badly to poor Farringdon. He worships the ground you tread on. It is the truth"—she shook her head reproachfully at Belinda's shrug—"and his affection is so sincere, so disinterested! Were you penniless to-morrow he would love you just the same. Now Towzer is, of course, another matter altogether. He wouldn't dream of marrying a woman without money. Poor thing, he could not afford to."

"I wish, oh, how I wish I had no money," said Belinda earnestly. "Or, rather—for I have none myself—that my father was quite poor. If only I were free"—she stretched out her arms with an impatient gesture—"free to live, to love, without regard to money, rank, position. It is much happier to be poor. It is splendid to work for one's living. I hate to feel helpless, dependent on other people's wishes, ruled by other people's wills."

"It is the penalty you have to pay for riches, dearie. All the same, there are compensations. Sometimes one meets a rich man worth loving. Look," she pointed to Farringdon, who was watching Belinda with a quiet steadfastness that made him for the moment quite good-looking.

He was a favourable specimen of British manhood; tall, well set-up, straight-limbed, with the figure of an athlete, he had a certain distinction of manner which went far to redeem the plainness of his face, and the somewhat ordinary tenor of his conversation.

Belinda changed colour as she met his eyes. The Princess noted it, and flashed a look of scorn over Belinda's head. Then she murmured:

"To be sincere, to be faithful—ah, what we women would forgive our lovers if they were but faithful and sincere! I have met but one such in my life—a young man, English, with all the faults and all the virtues of his race. I have met men as handsome, many more clever than he, but never one so simple yet so true.

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"Imagine," she slipped her arm in a caressing fashion round Belinda's shoulders, drawing the girl's fair head level with her own dark locks, "he is in love with me! And—" she paused, "for the first time since how many years, my heart stirs at the thought of him.

"He is very good to look at, this young man. Tall—he overtops both you and me, Belinda—dark-haired, with eyes of a strange shade of purple. His name"—she paused, letting her face rest on Belinda's face, grown suddenly white and fixed. "You are not well, my dear," she asked kindly; "the room is hot perhaps? Shall we stroll into the garden for a while?"

"No, no. I am quite well. His name, what is his name?"

"You are quite interested, I declare. Remember"—she shook her white hand warningly—"remember he can't fall a victim to your blue eyes, he has already shown a preference for mine. What, still curious?" as the girl showed signs of irritation at the delay. "Well, then, I'll tell you. He has a beautiful name. My friend is called David."

"*David!*"

Belinda repeated the name in a harsh voice, with white lips and trembling limbs. All vestige of self-possession and reliance left her. The art of Society, that art which trains and teaches the repression of feeling, fell away from her. The lessons that she had gained from the world were useless to her. She had received a crushing blow, and for the moment reeled under it.

The next her native courage came to her aid. She forced herself to smile, and murmured, somewhat tremulously, that David was a favourite name of hers.

"I once had a friend of that name too," she said, and gazed appealingly at Vera as though asking in dumb, piteous fashion, the beautiful foreign woman to assure her that this David was not hers—not the David that Belinda so dearly loved.

Vera smiled sweetly, but volunteered no further information, and Belinda, for once, lacked the strength of mind to ask for it. She came to me, poor child, full of her grief.

"Lady Peggy," she said, "does the Princess know David Carr?"

"It is not improbable," I answered.

"Did you"—she paused. "Please tell me," she asked wistfully, "if—if that was your reason for speaking to me as you did? I mean was that why you thought I ought to write and tell him he was free?"

"To be candid, Belinda, that was partly my reason."

"But"—and a tinge of colour flushed her cheeks—"David cannot marry the Princess; she has a husband already. He wouldn't be so wicked as to love a married woman."

I smiled discreetly, my belief in Vera being greater than my confidence in Carr's powers of resistance.

"Besides, he can't think so very much of her, or else he'd follow her to England, just as he came to Cairo when I was there."

"Well?" I said with a half-laugh.

"Lady Peggy, you don't mean he is here? Oh, no, he wouldn't, he *couldn't* be so cruel as to be here in England and not come to see me."

"My dear Belinda, be a little reasonable. We will suppose, for the sake of argument, that he is in this country—if you like, in this county. What then? He has received an intimation from you that he may, without breach of honour, regard himself as free. He has evidently accepted his freedom. Surely he is not to blame if he uses it, and," I watched her narrowly, "stops away from you."

"I never thought that," she cried, "I never dreamt that he would take it like *that*. Lady Peggy, please, please find out where David is. I won't do anything you do not wish. I will not write to him, I will not even try to see him. But, but I must know if he's in England."

"I will do my best to find out, dear," I replied, "but I must beg you to try to control yourself a little better. I don't mean now," I laid my hand gently on her shoulder—"who should you confide in but me? But with others who know you less, and do not think of you so kindly, you must show more reserve. Whatever, however, you suffer it must be done in secret; to all appearances you must not have a care."

"I'll do my best," she said, in a quavering sort of voice, "and thank you for speaking so kindly. But I cared for him so much; I have been so true, so constant. It seems more than I can bear that he should not have been faithful."

"My dear child, constancy is only a virtue when it becomes a necessity. There was no necessity for David Carr——"

She stopped me with a gesture.

"I believed in him," she said gravely, "and he seems to have failed me, that is all."

A little chat with Vera convinced me of the fact that it was now time for David to appear upon the scene. The Dean—under the influence of the Princess and in gratitude to Carr for his favourable opinion on the structure of the Cathedral arches—had decided to give a sort of *fête* at the Deanery.

The grounds were to be lit up with absurd Chinese lanterns, the town band—the Dean would encourage local talent—was to make night hideous with popular airs, and there was to be dancing on the lawn, and supper—kindly thought—in the dining-room!

It was agreed at Havilands that we should arrive in time for supper! Vera, however, as the prime instigator of the affair, had to suffer accordingly, and drove over soon after lunch, taking her maid and her evening gown with her.

It was arranged that during the entertainment Belinda should catch sight of David. How and under what circumstances I shall tell you in due course. In order to break the shock to her a little—I did not want a scene—I told Belinda that David had arrived in England some few days ago.

"Thank you," she said quietly. "I daresay he will write, or perhaps come himself. I think I have been very wrong to doubt him. It was foolish to write that letter. I see it now. He must have felt hurt; it looked perhaps as if I no longer cared for him. I shan't worry any more until David shows me plainly that he is tired of waiting. I shall still think of him as being true," she nodded brightly as she finished with a look in her beautiful eyes, that gave me a twinge. Well, she would not keep her faith in David long. That evening would see the end of it.

We arrived at Wilborough just after ten. Dinner at the Manor had been an hour earlier, much to Lord Haviland's annoyance, and we had driven off directly afterwards. Our hostess, who nourished a platonic friendship for the Dean—much to the horror of his sister, a woman who ordered his household—was disposed to enjoy the prospect of the evening's entertainment.

The rest of us were not enthusiastic. Crawley preferred bridge to any *fête* in the world. Most of the men felt like him, except Lord Farringdon, who undoubtedly preferred Belinda! That young lady had, to all appearances, regained her spirits. She was looking very well, and talked in a friendly and animated fashion to Lord Farringdon all the way to Wilborough.

The Deanery looked very pretty, and the lights were quite effective in the distance. A large number of the local clergy, with their wives and daughters, were among the guests, dancing with great vigour—the daughters, I mean, not the clergy—and some few with grace.

Farringdon whirled Belinda off to take part in a waltz; Crawley, having selected with great discrimination the youngest and most frivolous-looking of the curates' wives, followed suit; the rest of our party wandered in various directions, leaving me in peace to search out Vera.

I found the Princess in the Dean's study, a place admirably

adapted for reading—or repose, in which the Dean composed his excellent sleep-producing sermons. I did not enter the study, but gazed discreetly through the windows.

The picture therein was a pretty one. The room, heavy with the scent of lilac, was softly lit with rose-shaded lamps, and formed a fitting background to the man and woman sitting there.

David was fastening on Vera's gloves. The Princess was leaning back in a low armchair, David bending over her. It is a tantalising task to give a man to button a woman's gloves. He feels an almost irresistible inclination to kiss the slender fingers, the delicate wrist, the perfect arm, the glove encases. Button by button David fastened, lingering long over the task as though it were a task of love.

He finished with a sigh; then, acting on impulse, as men—the best of them—will act where a woman is concerned, he dropped lightly on one knee, and raising her hand pressed it with fervour to his lips. Her glance met his, they looked earnestly into each other's eyes; a moment only, but in that moment Belinda, like a peri at the gate of Paradise, stood by and saw them.

With a low, startled cry she turned away, hurrying like a hurt woodland creature to hide her pain.

I did not follow her; in such cases girls are best left alone. The less fuss made over them the quicker they recover. I knew quite well she would draw the exact conclusion I wished her to arrive at from the scene she had witnessed. She would believe David had ceased to care for her, and would regard a passing tribute to Vera's beauty as a declaration of love.

I expect my women readers are at this moment in a state of virtuous indignation against David. They consider him weak, foolish, and entirely unworthy of Belinda.

I notice that you middle-class women never make allowances for your men-folk. During this series a good many hard things have been said about Society women; our extravagance and frivolity are the least of the faults imputed to us. Now I am going to say a few words about *you*.

Since circumstances have compelled me to live amongst the middle class, several significant facts have come under my notice. When you are married, you seem to look upon your husband, not as a man "to love, honour, and obey," or the reverse, but as a sort of household fixture on whom a smart frock or a smiling face would be thrown away.

You treat him as a sort of "poor relation," who has to put up with cold mutton, glum looks, and settle the bills into the bargain. You never consider him. If your mother can't pay her taxes, you force the poor man into doing it for her. If you're worried about the baby's teeth, you compel him to share the anxiety. If you feel ill you give him an exhaustive diagnosis of your symptoms.

You appear before him in horrible, ill-made wrappers, and do not attempt to conceal the fact that your hair has not a "natural" curl. You cry loudly when he refuses a request, unashamed of red eyes and nose. You bore him to distraction, and you grudge him five minutes' conversation with another, perhaps less wearying woman. For the most part your homes are dull, your cooking is terrible, your conversation is vapid, and your taste in dress not good—ask your husbands if what I say isn't true.*

To return to Belinda—who freely shared the prejudices of her class—she remained absent for the rest of the evening, reappearing only at the last moment when we were about to start. She was leaning on Farringdon's arm, talking quite fast, and with a high colour in her cheeks. She came face to face with David and the Princess in the middle of the lawn. David impulsively moved forward, stretching out his hand.

For a moment I felt anxious. If she smiled and behaved in a reasonable manner all might yet be explained between them, and my pains and trouble go for nothing. I need not have been alarmed. Belinda stepped aside, gave a very ceremonious bow, and then passed on in silence. David, his face scarlet, returned to Vera's side.

[* *I print these remarks exactly as they were written by Lady Peggy Carstairs, although I do not necessarily share her views on the subject.*—Ed. S.S.]

The next morning Belinda asked me abruptly if I could not leave Havilands that afternoon.

"I can't stay here, Lady Peggy," she said fiercely. "If I do I shall say something, *do* something," she stamped her foot, "to the Princess. Why doesn't she go home to Russia?" the girl went on indignantly.

"She will be returning shortly," I said smiling, "next week, I think."

"Is David Carr remaining in England, do you know?" she asked.

I shook my head.

"He spoke last night of being back in Petersburg very soon. He travels, I think, about the same time as Vera."

The girl made no reply, but, the colour fading from her cheeks, left her face white as marble.

"When can we leave here, Lady Peggy?" she said wistfully.

I paused.

"What about Lord Farringdon, Belinda?" I said dubiously. "Isn't it rather unkind to him to leave so suddenly."

Belinda seemed uncomfortable.

"I told him we should most likely leave to-day," she murmured. "I said I was tired of the country and that you generally let me have my own way. And he——"

"Well, my dear," said I encouragingly, "and what did Lord Farringdon reply?"

"He said he was leaving Havilands to-morrow, and that he knew the Duchess of Staunton quite well."

"In that case," I answered cheerfully, "we will go."

And that afternoon, to the infinite regret of Towzer and the amusement of the Princess, we departed.

The Duchess of Staunton was an old lady, very wealthy, but horribly mean. The house in Brook Street was noted for its bad table, small fires, and niggardly arrangements generally.

Midge, who flitted in the second day after we arrived, declared that her Grace would starve a cat, and that Belinda was looking perceptibly thinner since she had come to town.

I suffered more than Belinda from the economy of the establishment. Indeed I had to go out most days to lunch or I would have starved. But I bore with the inconvenience cheerfully. Farringdon was daily with Belinda, who seemed to like and look forward to his calls.

One evening the Duchess gave a party. Belinda, radiant in white and pearls, danced many times with Farringdon, and sat out the numbers that she did not waltz. Things were looking very hopeful, so much so that I forgot to feel annoyed at the unexpected appearance of Eastacres, who, his mother having somewhat recovered, was about town as usual.

He bowed to me, and glanced round eagerly, seeking for Belinda. Just as she entered the room from the conservatory, leaning on Farringdon's arm, there was a slight stir about the door. A moment later and Princess Zouloff, magnificent in maize-coloured velvet, with diamonds round her throat and in her hair, swept into the room.

Belinda showed signs of discomfiture—I had kept it from her knowledge that Vera was invited—and clung in an appealing fashion to Farringdon. I was sorry for her, and a little vexed with Vera, when I realised that David was accompanying her. It was, I thought, a foolish thing to run the risk of his seeing and speaking to Belinda.

All thought of that, however, faded from my mind. With a low bow Eastacres advanced to the Princess, and in a quiet voice—audible only to those near at hand, Belinda and myself among the number, made the following announcement:

"I am grieved to be the bearer of evil tidings," he said. "But I am charged to tell you, and without delay, that news has been received within this hour of the death of your husband—Prince Zouloff."

For a moment Vera stood motionless, her face white, her eyes unnaturally bright. Then with a little cry she turned—turned to David.

"Free!" she cried, "I am free!"

Then, staggering, she fell—into his arms.

(*Another powerful instalment will appear next Tuesday.*)

# A Speculation in "Kaffirs."

## A Romance of the Stock Exchange.

"DIGBY! how about that bill of Causton's; due to-day, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, if it isn't met, you know what to do?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then see that you do it! I have my doubts about Causton's."

"Doubts, sir! why, they're as sound as——"

"Don't think so! and what's more, Digby, I have a shrewd suspicion that your faith in Causton and Co. isn't altogether disinterested."

"Mr. Hunter—I——"

"Oh, I'm not quite blind, Digby—I *know* that you are friendly with Saville Causton—that he has a fair daughter—that you visit his house at Bayswater—three and three easily make six, my friend!"

Hugh Digby, managing clerk to Hunter and Crane, Colonial bankers and agents, hardly knew how to parry his chief's insinuation. There was a certain amount of truth about it, which really made explanation all the more difficult and embarrassing. Hunter was not by any means a man easy to get on with. Middle-aged, crabbed, and of a sourly suspicious disposition, he looked upon nearly everybody with whom he came in contact as having sinister designs as towards himself. This was especially the case with regard to his manager, Digby, but he knew the latter's value, commercially, and availed himself of it for all it was worth. Hugh Digby was, in addition to being a smart business man, a kindhearted, generous fellow of about thirty, and liked by everybody.

It was this universal popularity which probably was at the root of Hunter's personal dislike of his chief subordinate; but the banker (he was sole partner, Crane having been dead for many years) found that his firm's prosperity was largely due to Hugh Digby's splendid management, and successful enterprise, and, therefore, for purely selfish reasons, disguised his real feelings. But his jealous animosity towards his manager was nothing compared with his absolute hatred of Saville Causton, stockbroker, and a leading light on "'Change." It originated in this way.

Some twenty years or so before the date of this story, the two men met, at an up-river garden-party. One of the guests was a Miss Esther Walrond, whose beauty and personal charm attracted the attention of more than one of the many gentlemen present. Both Hunter and Causton were no exceptions to this general feeling of male admiration for the lovely Esther, while each seemed to read instinctively the other's state of mind on the subject and to jealously resent it.

From the very first, however, Saville Causton, brighter, more lovable, and decidedly better-looking than his rival, made the running in the race for love. Before the people dispersed for return to town—almost, indeed, before the sun set upon the Cliveden woods—the young stockbroker had created such an impression that the inevitable end was only a question of time. To make matters worse, from Hunter's point of view, Causton received from his host and hostess a cordial invitation to stay the night and spend the next day on the river. With an assured conviction now that his chances were practically *nil*, Hunter reached his bachelor flat in Jermyn Street that night, full of unreasonable wrath against the man who had apparently succeeded in getting ahead of him in the business upon which he had set his heart—or that which with him, passed for such.

Within six months, Causton had married Esther Walrond, while David Hunter had vowed bitter revenge against the happy bridegroom. The latter who had succeeded to his father's business and position on "'Change," had never a thought beyond his own immediate interests, and affections, and was consequently quite oblivious to the slow but sure influence for evil being worked to his commercial disadvantage by the Austin Friars' banker. There came a day, however, when a necessity for the temporary borrowing of £5,000, resulted in failure. All the sources for such accommodation suddenly appeared to have mysteriously closed up; a polite refusal to do business, but without any assigned reason, being, in every case, the only reply to his applications for monetary assistance.

This was David Hunter's opportunity, the one for which he had been scheming and plotting for years—and he took it.

One morning Saville Causton received a note that astonished him not a little. It ran:

*The Colonial Bank, Austin Friars.*

DEAR SIR,—*I have strong reasons for believing that you are seeking temporary accommodation. I shall be pleased to do business with you to any amount that you may need, for one, three or six months, as may best suit you. I would rather not state exactly why I make this offer on behalf of my firm. You and I met many years ago, and you have doubtless forgotten the fact; but, being the possessor of an exceptionally good memory—at least so they say who know me—I venture to recall a passing acquaintance, in the hope that by so doing I may be of service to you. I shall be happy to honour your bill at any moment.—Faithfully yours,*

*To Saville Causton, Esq.* DAVID HUNTER.

The letter did not reach Causton's office in Draper's Gardens till just before closing time, so the somewhat bewildered stockbroker took it home with him for consideration.

Consultation with his wife cleared the air a bit, however.

"Oh, I remember him now!" said Esther, at breakfast the next morning, and opposite whom sat a nineteen-year-old replica of herself. "Surely, Saville, you recollect that disagreeable-looking man who made himself attentive to me at the Fabers' garden party, nearly twenty years ago?"

"No, I don't remember the fellow! However, remembrance or not, his offer, odd as it is, seems genuine, and—well—I *must* accept it, or I'll never get out of this hole I'm in."

"Why, it's the same bank where Hugh—I mean Mr. Digby, is manager," suddenly exclaimed Vera Causton, a tell-tale colour in her cheeks.

"Great Cæsar! so it is!" cried her father. "The murder's out! I'll see him about it first, before writing a reply to Hunter."

But to the stockbroker's surprise, Hugh Digby was as much in the dark as to why or how David Hunter had made the offer, as Causton himself.

"I can only suppose," he said, "that he by some means has heard of your need for accommodation, and, for some reason of his own, wishes to be of service to you. Still, I am a bit surprised, knowing him as I do—though, of course, under the circumstances, I am glad for your sake."

This settled the matter. Later on Hunter gave Saville Causton his cheque for £5,000, taking as security the stockbroker's bill at three months. For the rest of his life will Saville Causton remember that disastrous three months, and the day that saw it close; the day upon which the bill became due.

On the morning of that day, David Hunter was called away to Vienna, and would be absent a week or more.

It has been seen what were his final instructions to his managing clerk prior to leaving by the mid-day mail, his concluding words being especially significant.

"Should you," he said, emphatically, "not carry out my

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instructions to the very letter, I shall hold you personally responsible."

For nearly two years now there had been a tacit engagement between Vera Causton and Hugh Digby. A fine, high-spirited, beautiful girl, she was yet as large-hearted and womanly as her father had found her mother to be.

When, the clock showing half-past eleven, there were no signs of Causton, with the wherewithal to take up the bill, somehow, though very naturally, Digby's thoughts settled upon Vera. This cornering, which, perhaps, might mean the "hammering" of Saville Causton troubled him as much if not more on his sweetheart's account, than on any other.

As if to materialise his thoughts, a clerk brought him a card bearing Vera Causton's name.

"Show the lady in, Smiles! or, stay! I'll come into the outer office."

"Oh, Hugh!" exclaimed Vera excitedly. "We are in such troub——!"

"Sh!" was Hugh's whispered caution. "Say nothing here, dear! I'll come out with you for a few minutes. Smiles, I shall be in again directly. Ask Mr. Causton to sit down if he should call!"

Up and down the ancient precincts of Austin Friars, Vera and Hugh walked, the former pouring into her lover's ear all her fears for her father.

"Not home last night? That looks serious, Vera!"

"It does—it is!—oh, Hugh, can't you think of something for *me* to do?"

"If I were a free man, dear," he answered her, "I mean if the conditions upon which I hold my position at the bank did not make it important for me to act, or to even appear in any such transaction, I *do* know of a way in which I could set things straight for your father."

"Oh, Hugh!—tell me—tell me!—Perhaps it is, after all, something which I could do!"

"I am afraid not, Vera. If only your father were here it would be all right—he could act upon the information I possess, and make a fortune in less than two hours."

"Hugh!—I will not leave you till you have told me!" said the girl with determined voice and manner.

Then he told her.

"I have a friend," he said, "who is in touch with certain things which influence the well-being or otherwise of a popular "stock" on "'Change.'"

"Yes, yes!" she interrupted him impatiently. "I understand, Hugh! I understand!"

"Well, dear, this morning I received information from Spencer, which, if acted upon by someone not hampered as I am by hard and fast conditions, and at once, would result in the making of thousands."

"Yes, yes—go on!"

"An idea occurs to me! You are not altogether ignorant, dear, of stock-dealing, are you?"

"Well, I have heard father talk about and explain time-bargains, Contango, and——"

"Stop, darling, that's it—Contango—the buying of a stock which you hope to sell any time before the next settling day."

"Yes, Hugh—well?"

"Briefly, dear, then, I have a little saved, as you know. It is on current account in the "Colonial." I am going to withdraw it *now*. I will then write you a letter to a broker whom I know and can trust, and you will hand that and the money I shall give you (the latter as 'cover') and instruct him to buy for you 'Kaffirs' to the amount of ten thousand pounds."

"Ten thousand pounds, Hugh!—why, supposing it turns out wrong, what will become of *me?*"

"Oh, that will be all right, dear! 'Kaffirs' have fallen—you buy—in less than two hours—if my information is correct, which I quite believe it to be—'Kaffirs' will go up to a giddy height; you will immediately sell; take up Mr. Causton's bill; while the extra profit on the transaction will come in very handy as a fillip-up for your father's business."

As he planned, so did he and Vera carry out the idea.

Within a quarter of an hour Vera was in the broker's room, in consultation over the matter.

Now the broker in question, in common with everybody in the City, save only Hugh Digby and his friend Spencer, was absolutely ignorant of anything having happened which would be likely to influence the fall or rise of "Kaffir" stock. When, therefore, Vera requested the gentleman to purchase for her ten thousand pounds' worth of the stock, he thought her, in spite of Hugh Digby's letter of introduction, a trifle mad.

"But my dear young lady! do you know that this stock has fallen more than one per cent. since ten o'clock this morning."

"I am aware of it!" said Vera calmly; "but nevertheless I wish you to carry out my instructions."

"Well, Miss Causton (I may say that I have known your father for many years), as a matter of sentiment, I warn you; but as a matter of business—I will act on your instructions."

The "rise" prophesied by Hugh Digby's friend came sooner than ever he expected.

At a quarter past one the stock had gone up so considerably that Vera's hopes were doubly realised, so that before two o'clock the bill was taken up and was safe in Vera's pocket.

"Now to find my father!" said Vera to Hugh, as they were snatching a hasty lunch at the Albion in Aldersgate Street.

"But there is not the slightest clue to his whereabouts," was Hugh's reply.

"Well, I believe I shall find him, and that before long," said Vera. "Anyway, see me, dear, to the Tube, Bank Station, and I will think it out during the journey to Queen's Road."

Now Saville Causton was an inveterate pipe-smoker, and invariably sought a smoking carriage when travelling by rail.

Vera's car was empty, comparatively, from the Bank onwards.

At British Museum Station she noticed a man with his overcoat collar up, board the train and enter the smoking car which happened to be next to the one in which she was riding.

Vera was nothing if not prompt and self-reliant. If the mere studying of appearances meant the defeat of purpose, she was unconventional enough to throw everything not strictly necessary overboard, and aim for the essential only.

So in this instance.

In the man who entered at British Museum, she unmistakably recognised her father, and when the train stopped at Oxford Circus, she unhesitatingly crossed the platform into the smoking car, and, coming behind Saville Causton, who sat upon a cross bench, touched him lightly upon the shoulder.

It is needless to say more than that, all explanations made by Vera, the father and daughter rejoiced together; the former, a bit ashamed, perhaps of his cowardice, loudly extolling Hugh Digby's shrewdness and timely help.

David Hunter's disappointment on his return, at finding the bill redeemed was intense. And yet there was nothing to find fault with. Hugh Digby had acted throughout with loyalty to his firm as well (though Hunter only suspected this) as with consideration for Saville Causton. It proved to be the beginning of a better state of things, for from that day forward the business of Causton and Co. prospered as in the days of old.

All this was as gall and wormwood to David Hunter; but he was powerless to stem the tide of Causton's progress towards re-success, and never again attempted to strike at his old rival behind his back. Four months after the "Kaffir" episode, invitations were issued by Mrs. Causton to her daughter's wedding.

"Who do you think I am going to send one to?" asked Esther of her husband.

"Can't say!—the Lord Mayor, perhaps?"

"Nonsense, Saville! What do you say if I have asked Mr. David Hunter?"

"Say!—why, that in the first place, he won't come—and next, that if he does show up, all the wine and milk will most certainly turn sour."

"Now, do be reasonable, Saville! Don't you think that I owe the poor man something for disappointing him, and marrying you?"

"I don't know, I'm sure—what do you say, Vera?"

"Why, that if Mr. Hunter likes to see mamma's daughter married, he ought to be given the opportunity."

"Ah, you'll see!—he won't come!"

And he didn't.

**Roger Easton.**

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THIS prize is so huge that it is almost impossible for one to realise at first thought what it really means. Therefore the following hints will probably enable you to grasp the full value of such a regular income:

**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** means, unless you are extravagant, absolute freedom from money troubles as long as you live.
**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** is an insurance against depression and mental worry.
**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** will enable you to dispense charity with a liberal hand.
**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** will buy you a bigger house and enable you to live in better style.
**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** will cover the cost of taking a cottage in the country and living there in comfort for the rest of your days.
**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** will pay the expenses of months of foreign travel.
**£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE** will buy anything you can possibly want, from a piano to a motor car.

In fact, there is no limit to the things you can do with **£5 A WEEK FOR LIFE.**

***THE prize will be paid to the person (perhaps you) who correctly solves the pictures which appear below, together with other pictures which will appear in PEARSON'S WEEKLY under the conditions printed in that paper.***

***Each picture consists of certain objects, the names of which represent the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom. For example, the hull of a ship would mean "Hull." Every name will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.***

A further sum of **£1,000 in cash** will be distributed as consolation gifts amongst those who come next to the first winner in the following manner:—

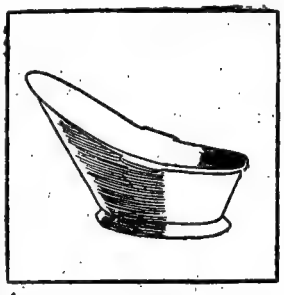
## FIRST CONSOLATION GIFT, £100.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2nd Cash Gift | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | £50 | 6th Cash Gift | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | £25 |
| 3rd " | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | £50 | 7th " | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | £25 |
| 4th " | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | £25 | 8th to 57th Cash Gifts | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | £10 each |
| 5th " | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | £25 | 58th to 97th " | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | £5 each |

So you see, even if you do not succeed in securing the first prize of £5 a week for life *(which will be paid under any circumstances)*, you have a good opportunity of securing one of the cash gifts.

If you find out the names of the railway stations represented by the pictures shown here, you should write down the name under each, put your name and address at the foot, and then get a copy of next week's PEARSON'S WEEKLY, in which you will find further pictures.

☛ If you are unable to secure a copy of PEARSON'S WEEKLY or BRADSHAW'S GUIDE, drop a reply post-card to the Publisher, PEARSON'S WEEKLY, Henrietta St., London, W.C., and he will get you out of your difficulty. ☚



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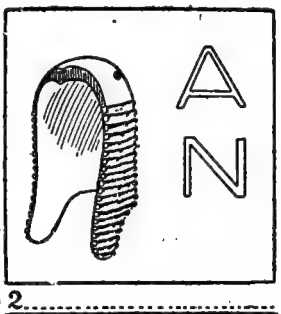


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Write your Name and Address here .....

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# A Temptation and a Fall.

## With a Very Happy Sequel.

A DARK-HAIRED girl in a white jersey with a red ribbon round her neck, sat at the window of a small cottage situated in the village of Tweeford. The street on which the cottage faced was narrow and dark, and the room in which the girl sat was clean, but poorly furnished.

She was very sweet and pretty, and looked as much out of place in her dingy, mean surroundings, as a moss rose in a London garden. Her brown eyes were clouded, and she spoke in a weary tone to a patient-looking old lady, who sat in an armchair by the fire—for there was a small fire, although it was a warm afternoon in September.

"It's no use, mother," said Effie, with a sigh. "We have not got the money, and we are not likely to get it either."

"I wonder, my dear, if you were to go to Radling with a letter to old Mr. Jones, whether he would give me the money."

"I don't believe so, and I don't want to go to Radling, and I hate old Jones!" cried the girl petulantly. "I'll go on the river instead; Mr. Baines will lend me a boat."

She rose and began looking behind the coal-scuttle for her hat. It was the place she usually threw it when she came in. Mrs. Jessop sighed heavily. The sum wanted was only £20, but to these two lone women it was as unobtainable as two millions.

It was owed for rent long overdue, and Effie had been to the landlord with tears in her pretty brown eyes, and begged for time, but now tears were unavailing, and the money had to be found within fourteen days.

"*Dear* Mr. Baines, let me go for a row," she said some few minutes later, sidling up to the boat owner.

He had a great weakness for pretty Miss Jessop, and his wife declared he would give her his pony and traps and all his business if she but asked for it.

"Let me have the *Elsie*—may I?" she continued, indicating a lovely little boat fresh from the painter's hands.

"Not that one, missy," replied Mr. Baines. "She 'ave just come from Lunnon this day morning, she 'ave—you take 'er, missy—she's good, she is," and he helped her into another boat of less charming exterior.

If she looked pretty on shore, the girl in the white jersey looked ten times more so on the water. But it was not of her appearance she was thinking. The fact of their wanting £20, and there being only one shilling and sixpence for the next day's dinner, occupied her mind much more, and the sun was declining when she turned the boat homeward, still undecided as to whether it should be stewed steak or "a little fish to make up."

Suddenly coming towards her round the bend of the river she saw another boat with a single occupant—and that occupant a man. As it came closer she recognised the boat as the *Elsie*, with her freshly-varnished sides bravely glittering in the sunlight.

"Pah!" said Effie in disgust. "Some horrid tourist down for a couple of hours, who can afford ninepence an hour."

But when he came closer she altered her opinion. The man in the boat was Jeffery Standing, whose father, the rich diamond merchant, had taken the Grange for the season.

As the boats passed, Mr. Standing bestowed a stare of hearty admiration on the girl in the white jersey, and she looked down and blushed, and hated herself for so doing.

Some hours later he passed her again. It was in the narrow village street, while she was out thoughtfully expending her one and sixpence. She had dropped her handkerchief, and he ran after her and gave it back, and raised his hat and asked if he might help her carry her parcels home as they lived almost next door, but she curtly thanked him and hurried home, uncertain as to whether he had not first taken her handkerchief from her pocket and then given it to her!

The next day Mrs. Jessop was firm. Effie must go to Radling with a letter to Mr. Jones. She put it off as late as she could, and finally departed, very much out of temper.

"It *is* a shame," she grumbled, "wasting a beautiful day like this hunting about for a horrid old man, and I know that I am no more likely to get the money from him than I am of seeing it opposite to me in this carriage."

Just at that moment she caught sight of a glitter between the opposite seat and the stuffed back of the carriage. She was alone in the compartment, so, bending forward, she put her hand out to feel what it was.

The next moment she had drawn out a heavy green morocco purse.

For quite a minute she stared in stupefaction at the sight, and then with a beating heart she undid the clasp.

There lay before her twenty-five pounds in gold and a lot of loose silver. If the skies had fallen, Effie would not have been more astonished. She rubbed her eyes and stared at the money, and then rubbed her eyes again. For fully three minutes she sat thus holding the money in her hands, and then came the question—"What to do with it?"

Should she give it to the guard when the train stopped and have it taken to the lost property office, and perhaps never be claimed? Or, perchance, had Heaven sent it to pay the rent; therefore, should she keep it? Nobody being present to answer her self-put questions, she arrived in Radling station, and straightway she put the money in her pocket and walked quickly away, resolved at present to keep it and see what happened. Mr. Jones was out, and was not expected back, so, heavy-hearted, and with a guilty sensation of theft upon her, Effie journeyed home, expecting every moment someone to put his hand on her shoulder and ask where she got the money from. She *knew* she ought to give the purse up, but she was very poor, and she yielded to temptation as so many have done. The next few days were those of the keenest agony to the poor girl. Every step that passed the house she expected to belong to the constable, and every knock at the door sounded like a summons from Radling Police Court.

She stayed indoors as much as she could, for she was afraid to meet the eyes of the townspeople, and was also afraid of

hearing something about the purse, for commonsense told her nobody would be likely to lose a large sum like that and make no inquiries.

At last, a week later, came a curt and cold refusal from Mr. Jones, together with a peremptory notice from the landlord to pay the rent the next day. Mrs. Jessop alternately wept and prayed for the money, and at last Effie set her little teeth, and said to herself, "Very well, I *will* take the money, I am a thief, I suppose, but I shall not be alone in the world. I'll take him the money to-night, and then—and then! What?"

Her thoughts took her no further; how she was to account for the sudden accession to wealth she could not fathom, so, woman-like, she left it alone, hoping for luck to help her out when the time should come.

Having decided upon her course of action, she felt easier, and sallied forth to buy some small household requisites, humming to herself.

Having made a tour of the village and made her purchases, she went home again.

The little house was silent. Poor Mrs. Jessop had gone out, to see if a friend would help her to find the money. Effie put away her parcels and sat down, and having nothing better to do, idly read the stale country news out of the paper that the candles had been wrapped in.

All at once a small paragraph caught her eyes, and the print danced madly before her! She held on to the table for support, and after a moment managed to read the following:

*Yesterday, Mrs. Mary Gibson, charged a young man of gentlemanly appearance with the theft of her purse. Her case was, that she and the accused were the sole occupants of the carriage from H—— to Radling. The purse, which contained the sum of £25 in gold besides some silver, was in her hand as she entered the carriage, because she took her ticket from it. On arrival of the train at Radling she found the door too stiff to open, and asked the accused if he would open it. This he did, and also helped her to alight, and it was then that she found her purse was gone. The accused is a gentleman of high social standing in the county, and the case is exciting a good deal of interest, as, although he stoutly denies the theft, it is understood he has been losing a good deal lately over horse racing. He stands remanded until next Tuesday.*

Next Tuesday? Effie raised her eyes to the ceiling and counted the days over. Heavens! next Tuesday was to-day and perhaps even then, while she sat there, some innocent man was being tried for the theft of the purse that *she*—Effie Jessop—had got in her possession!

Like one possessed she dashed upstairs, and, throwing on her hat and jacket, fled down the street to the railway station, the green morocco purse tight in her hand. The Radling train (there were but three a day) was just starting as she ran over the bridge and called loudly to the guard to wait for her.

He opened a smoking third, threw her in, and the train started. Effie sank exhausted upon a seat, and gazed helplessly at the purse. Poor man! Perhaps he has been convicted and sent to prison, and if he is married, the disgrace may kill his wife! Merciful Heaven! I shall then be a murderess as well as a thief!"

Poor Effie! this last thought nearly distracted her. The train had scarcely time to draw up ere she sprang from the carriage, and was away across the station and down the street towards the Court-house. A large number of idlers were outside.

Clasping the purse tightly against her beating heart, Effie wedged her small figure through the people into the crowded court room.

A loud humming sounded in her ears and she but indistinctly heard someone speaking: "Now it only remains to decide if the prisoner is the thief——"

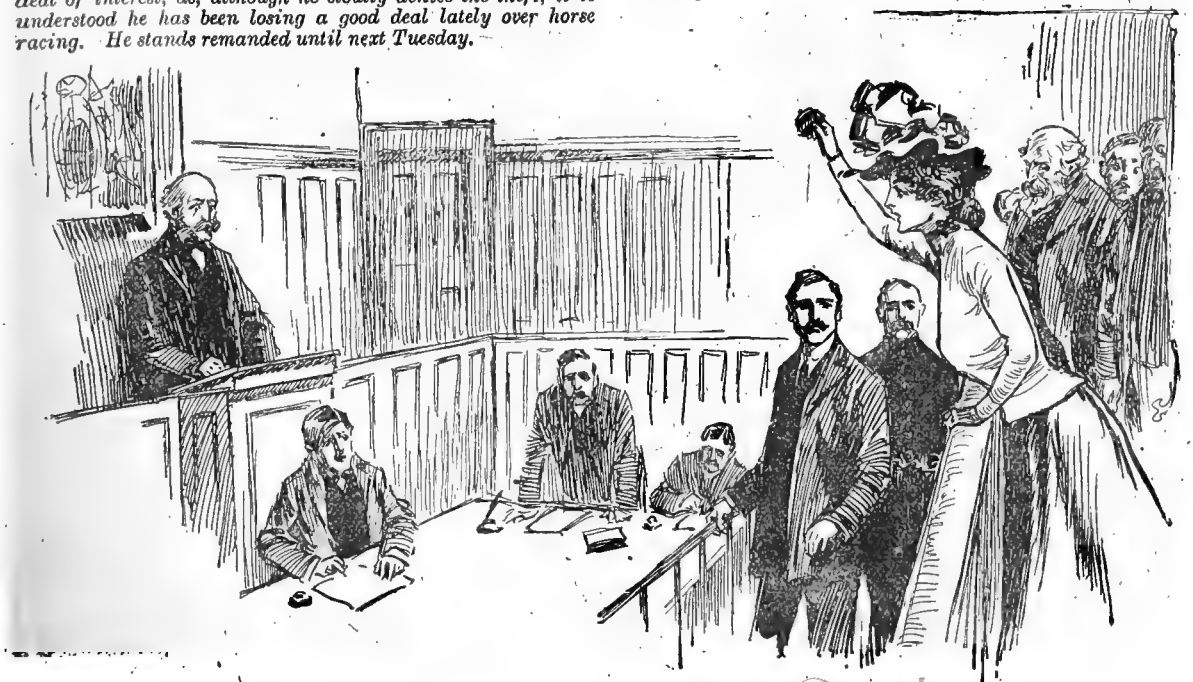
"He is not—he is not!" cried Effie, stepping forward and holding the purse high in the air, at sight of which an old woman in green glasses and a blue bonnet shrieked out: "My purse! My purse! Oh, the hussy!"

What a scene there was, and what a noise!

It was not until they threatened to clear the court that Effie's story could be heard.

The poor girl, so excited and so nervous, could hardly speak, and when the magistrate asked her why she had not given the purse up before, she could not answer at first, but on being pressed, she raised her pretty little head proudly and said:

"Because I am poor, and my mother is poor, and we wanted the money. I did not steal it, I found it, and was tempted to



"He is not a thief!" cried Effie, stepping forward, and holding the purse high in the air.

keep it. I only knew an hour ago that an innocent man "—she waved her hand vaguely towards the dock where she saw a man standing—"was accused of taking the money, so—so I have brought it back, although to-morrow my mother and I will be turned into the street without a home, for want of it!" and she burst into tears.

Then someone took her out of the court and into the open air. She sat down on a seat to recover, and curious knots of people gathered round to look at her, especially two rough-looking men, who said they would like to see what a woman was like who would bring £25 back to oblige an unknown person! It was wasting the gifts of Providence, according to them!

Then someone gave her his arm and assisted her into a beautiful carriage, wherein was an old gentleman. At sight of her he seized her hand and shook it fervently before everybody and said: "God bless you, my child, you have saved my life and the honour of my family, for had my son been convicted the disgrace would have killed me!"

Effie, still dazed, looked at the old gentleman, and wondered when she had seen him before.

A young man jumped into the carriage, and, raising his hat to the people who gave a cheer at the sight of him, the carriage started.

Effie turned round. The young man was Jeffery Standing.

"*You* here?" she said involuntarily.

"Rather!" he said with a laugh. "If it hadn't been for you, there's no knowing where I should have been."

"Why?" she said, looking mystified. "I don't understand; were you in there?" indicating the court-house.

"Was I *there?* Don't you know it was I who was accused of stealing that purse?"

* * * * *

And the villagers even now say that the wedding between Mr. Standing's only son and Miss Effie Jessop was the prettiest that has ever been seen.

E. S.

# Love by Proxy.

**Telling of the Happiness the Love-birds Brought.**

The Italian woman sighed. The murky atmosphere of a London fog and the sordid environments of a thickly populated street did not tend to diminish her mental gloom.

And business was bad.

The small cage containing a couple of paroquets on its fragile and rickety stand was her only source of income, and she did not derive therefrom as handsome an annuity as she would have wished. No one seemed to want their fortune told by the small green birds, who picked out the packets of paper stored away at one side of the cage. Even the little paroquets hopped about in a dismal sort of way, feeling compelled to show their solicitude for their respected mistress by a hopeless, despondent attitude, born of rheumatics in their little limbs, due to the damp, raw air.

Occasionally a hoarse chirp, by way of showing they were alive, broke from their throats. Then silence reigned in the cage.

Signora Democa drew her scanty shawl closer round her shoulders, shivered, and looked despondently at the pavement.

Presently she glanced up, and spied as dainty a young girl as you could wish to see tripping towards her. The girl stopped as she met the Italian's wistful glance.

"The signora will have her fortune told?"

"Trade is not good, is it?"

"Very bad, signora."

One of the birds corroborated this by a doleful croak.

The girl produced a penny. The woman rose, touched one of the birds with a stick, and, glad of something to do, it rushed at the first fortune packet with all its little might and thrust it through the cage bars. The girl laughed as she took it. The Italian's eyes flashed, and the dark, swarthy face lit up with pleasure.

"Undo, signora, and look."

She did so, and read:

"*If Fortune smile not on you now,*
*Take courage, for it will, I trow.*"

"How funny! How applicable," thought the girl, smiling.

"It pleases the signora?"

"Very much."

For a moment or two she glanced at the cage, undecided how to act. Then an inspiration suddenly flashed across her.

"Would you like to earn five shillings?" she asked.

The mention of such vast wealth nearly took the woman's breath away. As for the paroquets, they cocked their heads on one side and listened.

"Yes, kind signora."

"Now, what I propose is only for your ears—do you understand?"

"A seecreet, signora?"

"Yes. Tell me, does a gentleman, tall, good—good-looking, with a fair moustache pass your corner every morning?"

"Yes, signora."

The dark eyes flashed again.

"If I wrote something in one of the little packets—could—could you make the birds give it him?"

The Italian showed a beautiful set of white teeth.

"I would try very hard."

The girl waited while the birds fumbled for another packet. The fortune teller opened it carefully. After abstracting the printed matter, she handed the envelope to the dainty woman, who scribbled something on a piece of paper, placed it inside the packet, sealed it up, and saw it replaced in the cage, the first among the row of little papers.

"You must not let the birds give it to anyone else, mind."

"No, no. The signora can me trust. I give my honour of my word."

"Here is half-a-crown. You shall have the other when the gentleman has his 'Fortune.' You must not tell him anything."

"I understand. The saints bless the signora."

With many ejaculations and salaams the woman watched the girl walk away. Then, together with her rickety stand and cage went home rejoicing.

As for the paroquets they kept their own counsel, and

dreamt of a continual fluttering towards the packets of paper which refused to be set free.

At 9.30 next morning Signora Democa sat at her usual business corner, waiting for the tall gentleman to pass. The paroquets were in a fever of excitement—no doubt on account of the brilliant morning, which was as fine as the previous day had been depressing.

At last the tall man came along. He looked dejected.

"Morning, signor. A good day a fortune to tell."

"Rubbish!" he ejaculated.

"All truth, signor. One penny does it."

He caught sight of one of the green paroquets, with its little head cocked on one side.

"Looks very knowing, that bird."

"Yes, yes. He knows plenty!"

He fumbled for a penny, gave it her, and was about to pass on when he observed a violent agitation on the part of one of the paroquets, which, being judiciously progged by the "magic wand" of its mistress, was dragging forth one of the fortune packets.

"Means business, that bird. Won't take a penny for nothing in return, eh?"

"Plenty beesiness. The signora will open his packet?" and she smiled.

Never in his life had the man done anything so childish; but things were so wrong and luck so against him, that he thought he would see what the wretched packet contained.

Expecting to see some verses of the usual cheap sentimenality, he opened the paper case, and abstracted a neatly-folded little note. When he had read the contents, his face was a study that Signora Democa never forgot.

"By all that's wonderful!" he gasped.

The fortune-teller smiled benignly.

"Does not it the signor please?"

"Where did you get this—this," he almost shouted.

"It was with them altogether amongst the papers."

Though he knew the woman was not adhering to the strict truth—perhaps for some reason best known to herself—he said nothing, but stood stock still.

"You wouldn't object to earning a sovereign, would you?"

Signora Democa could not speak for astonishment.

"You shall have it now if you do what I ask."

She nodded emphatically.

"I am going to write a note and put it in this packet. Have you ever noticed a lady, rather tall and well dressed, dark hair—pretty, yes, very pretty, pass you?"

"Sometimes, with a leetle dog."

"By jingo, yes! You must make one of the little beggars"—indicating the paroquets—"give her the packet containing the message."

"I do that, I think."

He gave her a sovereign, and then wrote—"Yours safely received. Can't make it out at all. Does it mean all is well?" sealed it up in the packet, and charging the woman to see that it got into the proper hands, and also to say nothing about it to anyone, went away, looking a good deal happier.

If the Italian was mystified and curious, one may forgive her. It was no business of hers what people chose to do, or how they did it, so long as she received ample compensation. Whether she scented a courtship, a dark plot, a marriage, a scandal, mattered not.

She rejoiced in her fortune, and awaited the trend of events.

Meanwhile the man, Laurence Godfrey, of the Inner Temple, briefless, but hopeful, walked on and cogitated deeply. Things had not gone well with him of late. His uncle, from whom he had great expectations, said that if he married a penniless girl who was nobody, he would cut him off without even the proverbial shilling.

Sweet Molly Giffard, to whom he had been secretly engaged, was the victim of her father's wrath, who would not sanction the engagement of his daughter to a penniless barrister. He had forbidden his son-in-law in prospective, the house, and commanded all correspondence to cease. Poor Molly was in much distress, but anxiously awaiting her twenty-first birthday, when she would inherit money, and—love knowing no prison bars—resolved to elope. The two had not met for more than a year, when Molly conceived the brilliant idea of utilising the paroquets as a means of conveying Cupid's messages, knowing Laurence passed the Italian daily.

Thus it was that Laurence Godfrey once more began to hope.

The morning following Godfrey's deal with the paroquets, Molly visited the Signora Democa and received the answer from Laurence. She gave the fortune-teller the other half-crown and wrote another message, which was to be given to "the gentleman who had the previous one."

Signora Democa now began to see a romance. The exchange of "fortunes" had been in progress about three weeks, and the paroquets were frantic with excitement, when, one bright, sunny morning they saw Laurence step briskly up, looking very smart, wearing a happy expression and a white buttonhole.

"Good morning, signora," he said.

"Fortune this morning, signor?"

"That will come along presently," he said. "Here's something to be going on with," and he slipped a five-pound note into the woman's hands.

"No further use for the birds," he volunteered.

The Italian failed to find her tongue. She could think of nothing but the money.

"Has—has the lady with the little dog passed this morning?"

"No, signor, not yet."

He looked anxiously down the road, and an instant later appeared perfectly happy as "the lady with the little dog"—the latter being conspicuous by its absence—appeared round the corner.

"Molly!"

"Laurence!"

That's all the Italian heard. She saw sweet Molly blush rose red and look radiantly happy.

"It is this lady's twenty-first birthday, signora," said Laurence, "and I wanted to wish her many happy returns of the day."

"So I came," put in Molly.

"Cab!" shouted Laurence suddenly.

One soon came rattling along.

"Get in, darling," he said, as he guarded the wheel from soiling her dress.

"Where to, sir?"

"St. Georges' Church, Rowland Gardens, cabby!"

"Yessir."

Then he took his place beside her in the cab.

"Oh, Laurence, I didn't mean to—today," stammered Molly.

"It's all right, dear girl. Banns been published three weeks ago—special license, and everything else."

"What *will* father say?"

"'Where there's a will there's a way,' I should think. Oh, by-the-bye, my uncle died last week and left me all his money Oh, Molly, aren't you glad?"

"Well—not—not very sorry," and she hid her face on his shoulder.

"It's all through those paroquets—they never made a mistake, and I've had your messages every day. When they die we'll have the little beggars stuffed."

"Yes," said the girl, "they are dear little things."

**Dagney Major.**

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# CAROL FERRARS.

## The Tale of a Lady Companion.

"Really, auntie, when I am married, you must get a companion.

"Yes, I know, dear," as her aunt moved impatiently, "that you don't like strangers, but who is to order the dinner, arrange the flowers, clean the birds, take the dogs for a walk, see you to bed, read to you, start your cross-stitch, and keep it right?" Mollie paused for breath.

"Oh, dear!" sighed old Mrs. Thorn, "I had no idea you had done so much for me!"

Her niece smiled with unconscious irony.

"Mollie, dearest, are you sure you really love Archie enough to marry him? Men can be very trying when they are husbands," put in the old lady artfully.

"Yes, auntie, I am sure I do," emphatically: "I shall be able to manage him all right. You see, I haven't studied dear uncle for ten years without gaining some experience of what men do and say when the dinner is badly cooked and the breakfast not on the table punctually at nine."

"Yes, yes, I know, but all men are not like your uncle, some men make much more fuss than he does." Mollie raised her eyebrows but forebore to make any remark. "They even *swear*, dear, before the servants if the plates are cold at dinner; and then they can be so mean over money, and you know you have none of your own."

"No, but I intend to have an allowance from the beginning. I wouldn't allow even Archie to dole me out a sovereign or less at a time, and make me account for every penny I spend. Don't worry about me, auntie, I am quite capable of looking after myself, and I think there are very few girls now-a-days who are such muffs over money as the old-fashioned women used to be, from all accounts. Now, do let me write out an advertisement and send it to the *Morning Post*," and Mollie laid down the cross-stitch sideboard cloth whose intricate pattern was always getting in a muddle under Mrs. Thorn's feeble and impatient fingers.

"There, I don't think you can possibly make another mistake in it, I've marked it all out so plainly, and where you should leave seven holes between each star I have put in the first stitch, so that it will be quite easy."

"Thanks, dear," gratefully, "yes, it does look clearer now. I don't know whether these spectacles are not so strong as the last ones, or whether it is that this pattern is more difficult, but I seem to have found it easier to go wrong than usual," remarked the vicar's wife plaintively, and Mollie, thinking of the number of times her work on her trousseau had been interrupted this last busy week, could but agree with her.

"Still bothering over that eternal cross-stitch?" asked the vicar briskly, entering the room at the moment. He bent over his wife's chair and kissed her forehead. With all his trying ways, the vicar was always devoted to the wife who had trotted through nearly forty years of wedded life contentedly beside him. They had no children and, for the last ten years, ever since Mrs. Thorn had passed through a rather severe illness, they had provided a home for the vicar's niece in return for a hundred and one little kindly offices which she had performed for them, thereby increasing the comfort of the domestic arrangements at the vicarage incredibly.

"Uncle, will you help me persuade auntie to advertise for a companion to take my place here after next month? If you like," turning to the old lady, "she might come a week before the wedding, so that I can show her all the things which I do, and then she would have got into your ways before I leave."

"Very sensible, my dear, very sensible. Come, Jennie, make up your mind to do it; Mollie will give her a week's training to show her what her duties will be."

While her uncle was talking, Mollie wrote out the advertisement and read it aloud:

"'Required immediately as companion to an elderly lady, a refined young gentlewoman with musical tastes, must be fond of the country and willing to look after pets. Apply, Mrs. Thorn, the Vicarage, Bramleigh.' Will that do? We must find someone who will take care of you," stroking the big tortoiseshell cat which had curled itself up on the window-sill beside her. Rufus stood up and arched his back and purred in reply, then stepped leisurely out of the window to sun himself and blink with overfed indulgence at the sparrows twittering and quarrelling on the gravel path below.

The gong sounded for lunch, and the discussion on the subject of the companion ceased. The vicar was strict about being punctual for church and at meals, and rose immediately the first sound of the gong reached his ears, and held out his arm to his wife. It was his invariable custom to do this, and as Mollie rose too to follow them she wondered whether the new companion would treat all his little fads with the loving tolerance that she did, or whether she would come down late for meals and hurry to church after the bell had stopped—direst offence of all in the vicar's eyes. He always expected everyone to sit waiting for five minutes at least before the gong was expected to sound for meals, and to be waiting ready dressed to start for church soon after the bells began to ring for service.

After lunch the old lady always slept for an hour, and Mollie was free to do as she liked. It was the time of the day she enjoyed most, and part of it was always devoted to her daily letter to her *fiancé*. The time was drawing near now, however, when she would exchange this peaceful, quiet life at the vicarage, whose quiet was only disturbed by little domestic storms in a teacup, for a home of her own, and Mollie had looked forward to that little new home eagerly through the last three years during which Archie had been building up his practice as a country doctor. Much as she loved her uncle

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nd aunt, and grateful as she felt to them for giving her a home, he yet longed to be independent and have a home of her own. She wrote her letter, and sat wondering not a little about the girl who was to take her place and fulfil the familiar duties which had been her care for so long.

The morning's post brought a sheaf of letters, evidently answers to the advertisement. Mollie carried them up to her aunt's room and sorted them out and read them to her while the old lady sipped her coffee and ate her dainty little breakfast.

"Oh, Mollie, dear, that sounds a very sad case, I really think I ought to engage her," said Mrs. Thorn, as Mollie read a touching tale of poverty and sorrow.

"Wait a bit; you mustn't decide in a hurry, and besides, I believe she is a humbug, and has piled it on for your benefit—elderly ladies always have kind hearts," said practical Mollie astutely.

Then she went on reading.

"I like the look of this writing," said Mrs. Thorn presently, picking up an envelope addressed in a neat, pretty writing. Her niece opened it and read it aloud. It was short and concise, and told no tale to try to win the sympathy of the reader; it stated clearly the qualifications of the writer, and there was a straightforward and honest tone about it which attracted both Mrs. Thorn's and Mollie's fancy directly.

"That is one, at any rate, worth answering," said the old lady, and laid it on one side. A few others were looked over, then Mollie took the ones Mrs. Thorn liked best and answered them.

The fire was burning brightly in the cosy drawing-room, for although the month was May the evenings were still chilly.

They were all sitting round the fire chatting after dinner, the vicar, his wife, Mollie, and her *fiancé*, who had come over to dine and sleep.

There was a little air of suppressed excitement about them all, for the new companion was expected to arrive that evening.

They had not yet seen her, as the address on her letters was of a remote part of Yorkshire, but she had sent her photograph for the inspection of her employers. The face it portrayed was undeniably pretty and refined looking.

A loud peal at the bell made the family jump; the vicar frowned.

"I hope she is not a noisy young woman," anxiously.

"She didn't ring, uncle; it was Johnson, our one and only cabman," said Mollie, smiling, as she hurried out into the hall to welcome the newcomer.

Pretty as the photograph had proclaimed her to be, they were none of them prepared for the lovely colouring and tall, graceful figure of the girl who, a few minutes later, followed Mollie into the room. She looked tired and nervous, but held her head erect for all her weariness as her eyes travelled from one to the other, and took in her new surroundings.

Mrs. Thorn liked her at once; she was prepossessed in her favour because she had picked her letter out of all the others as the one whose writer she hoped would prove suitable and, of course, one is always pleased to find oneself in the right. Mollie liked her because she looked friendless and poor, and because she listened deferentially to the vicar's rather pompous speech of welcome. The two men liked her because she was young and pretty, but of course they said it was because she had such a nice manner, and was refined and ladylike looking.

As soon as she had gone up to her room for the night, pleading her fatiguing journey as an excuse for retiring so early, they were free to make remarks on the new companion, and she, when she had escaped their friendly scrutiny, acknowledged to herself that she had indeed come into a haven of rest at last.

The days passed swiftly before the wedding, and on all sides the new companion, Carol Ferrars, earned golden opinions; already everyone in the house appealed to her in questions of taste and about all the arrangements for the great event.

"I feel almost jealous of you, Miss Ferrars," said Mollie aughing one day, but with a ring of truth underlying the joking voice.

"You have nothing to be jealous of," replied Miss Ferrars sadly; "you have all your happy life before you, mine is already in the past."

Mollie pressed her hand sympathetically, seeing that the girl's lovely blue eyes were brimming over with tears.

"How can anyone so young and pretty as you say such a thing?" But Miss Ferrars was silent, and went on trimming the hat which she was doing up to wear at the wedding.

Mollie repeated this conversation the next time that Archie came over.

"There is something very sad about her face," he replied, "and the curious thing is that I am sure I have seen her before. I thought so the moment she came in that night that she arrived."

"You must be mistaken; I don't think you could have seen her, she lived up in Yorkshire," replied Mollie.

The excitement of the wedding over, Mr. and Mrs. Thorn and the companion settled down to the quiet, uneventful routine of the life at Bramleigh Vicarage. The old couple had grown very fond of Carol, as they called her, having soon dropped the more formal Miss Ferrars. In fact, they remarked to each other, almost as if ashamed to say so, that really they did not miss Mollie a bit.

There was a great contrast between the two girls in character as well as in looks, for Mollie was as brisk and decided as Carol was gentle and tactful. The cats and dogs transferred their affections to Carol at once, and even Rufus, who was generally disagreeable with strangers, allowed her to brush and comb his wonderful coat the day after her arrival.

A few days after the wedding the first month of Carol Ferrars' life at the vicarage was completed.

"Would you prefer to have your salary paid quarterly or monthly?" asked Mrs. Thorn kindly, when Carol carried in her breakfast tray.

"Oh, I should like it monthly so much, if you don't mind," said the girl eagerly, colouring brightly.

"Certainly, if you will get me my purse I will give it to you now; I daresay you would like the money instead of a cheque."

Carol thanked her gratefully and took the money.

The following day Mrs. Thorn and Carol drove into the village to do a little shopping. The old lady made a few purchases at the little draper's, and put her hand into her pocket as the assistant was making out the bill, for her purse. She uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"What a bother. I have felt my purse at home. Perhaps you wouldn't mind, dear, lending me a few shillings. It was silly of me to forget it."

Carol drew out her purse without pausing to think. She opened it; it was empty of all save one shilling.

"I am so sorry," she stammered, "I have only got a shilling."

Mrs. Thorn looked surprised.

"But, my dear," she began, "it was only yesterday that I gave you——" Then, seeing the look of genuine distress on the girl's face, she stopped. The assistant was smiling broadly; however, Mrs. Thorn was, of course, well known and extremely popular in the village, so the matter was easily smoothed over, and they left the shop.

"You must have thought it very strange, dear Mrs. Thorn," said the companion that evening, as she got out the board and sat down to play halma with the old lady, "that I had no money in my purse this afternoon, but——"

"Don't apologise or explain, my dear," said Mrs. Thorn kindly; "the money was yours, and you had a perfect right to do as you liked with it. It surprised me for the moment, but, of course, you may need it to send to some poor relative. Anyhow, it is no business of mine," and she settled down to her game.

It was noticed by the inmates of the vicarage that, as time went on, Miss Ferrars began to lose the bright look which had been one of the beauties of her expressive face; she seemed always on the alert, and the nervousness of her manner increased. Mrs. Thorn was the last to notice it, and it war Mollie, who had come on a visit to the vicarage, who drew hes attention to the altered looks of her companion.

One evening after dusk, Dr. Tomlin, Mollie's husband, was returning from seeing an old labourer who had met with an accident, and to whom he had been called in the village doctor's absence. As he was strolling quietly up a path in the shrubbery which was little used, he came suddenly upon two people talking in agitated tones.

He recognised one, it was Carol Ferrars; but the other figure, which was that of a man, was a complete stranger to him.

They separated just as he reached them, and Carol said—

"Good-bye, Jim, for God's sake don't run this risk again, even to see me; think—think," and Archie's ears ached at the despair in her voice, "what it would mean to me if you were caught!"

At that moment they both turned and saw that Dr. Tomlin must have overheard the words; the man sprang forward almost as if he would seize the young doctor by the throat, but Carol threw her arm round his neck and turned him away. "Go!" she cried, panting with terror and excitement, and her companion hurried away into the dusk without the doctor having seen his face. Carol turned to the doctor and laid her hand on his arm.

"Dr. Tomlin, I feel I can trust you. Will you promise me that, if you hear anyone making inquiries for Jim Trench, that you will say that you know nothing about him, that you have never seen him?" Carol's voice was unsteady with emotion, she looked faint and exhausted.

"Dear Miss Ferrars, I would do anything to help you, but will you not trust me a little more. I am all at sea. Who is Jim Trench, and why are you afraid of him being seen?"

"I cannot stop to tell you now, Mrs. Thorn will be wondering where I am," her manner growing calmer. "But if you will meet me here to-morrow morning at eleven, I will tell you everything; but you must not let anyone else guess my secret, not even Mollie."

"I promise," said Archie Tomlin, holding out his hand.

An urgent message had been brought up from the village while the vicarage family were having their breakfast next morning, for Dr. Tomlin.

A stranger to the village had suddenly attacked a man in the street the evening before, and the village doctor wanted Dr. Tomlin to join him in witnessing to his insanity before the magistrate, was the request which the note contained. Without thinking, he read it aloud; Carol Ferrars rose to her feet excitedly.

"I don't believe it," she cried. "You won't witness against him, Dr. Tomlin, you shall not!"

"What is it to you?" said the vicar gravely. "Do you know anything about this man, Miss Ferrars?"

The colour faded slowly from her face, leaving it white as death. She sat down again, every limb trembling.

"He is my husband," she said in the silence which followed the vicar's words, and, bowing her head in her hands, broke into a storm of tears.

Mollie rose and, going to her, drew her into her arms to comfort her.

The vicar and the young doctor went down to the village together.

**F. Lindsey.**

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"Did you ever try to stop a dangerous dog by catching his eye?" "No; I can't run backward."

She (at the theatre): "I don't understand what the detective is supposed to be doing in this piece." He: "I fancy he is looking for the plot."

He (kissing her): "And so you will be mine?" She: "Yes, dear, though I am afraid it will hurt my reputation for being such a self-possessed girl."

Stranger: "I want to buy a good watch dog." Dog Fancier: "Here is the one you want, sir. Trained by an expert. He can tell an insurance agent or a tax collector a mile off." "And what will he do then?" "Do? He'll chew 'em into soup bones." "Well, he won't suit me." "Why? Most people want a dog like that." "Yes, I know; but I'm a tax collector, you see."

# Your Editor Chats.

## NEW THINGS COMING ALONG.

I have a number of good things in store for readers and they will soon be coming along. One of them is in the shape of a new serial story. This will start in a few weeks, and it has been written by Mr. R. Norman Silver, whose work is already well-known to readers of Short Stories. It was he who wrote "The Golden Dwarf," "Tales Told off Duty," "The Brains of the Force," and other stories that were much appreciated by readers. The new story is fresh and crisp throughout, and is full of dramatic scenes. It is a story which will be of special interest to the fair sex in the power with which the love element is treated. At the present moment Mr. Silver is putting the last finishing touches to the story, and he tells me that of all the stories he has written, this has given him the greatest satisfaction. This remark coming from the author himself should brand the narrative as being of more than ordinary interest.

## A NEW COMPETITION.

Another surprise in store for you is a prize competition on absolutely new lines; nothing of the kind has ever appeared before; it is a competition for which every reader may enter, and requires no great amount of work. I may say at the outset that it is not in any shape or form a picture puzzle competition, nor is it an anagram competition, nor, in fact, any sort of competition that has been used before. You may wonder why I don't tell you straight out what sort of thing it is, but my reason for not doing so is that there are many rival papers which would be only too glad to get an inkling of what is coming along in Short Stories in order to try to steal a march on the paper. In a few weeks your curiosity will be satisfied, and you will have an opportunity of spending a few hours in what may prove to you to be profitable employment.

## A NEW SERIES.

The third surprise is a new series of splendid articles to follow the series entitled "How I Chaperoned Belinda." These are entirely different from the previous series, and have been written under very interesting circumstances. I shall be able to tell you more about them next week.

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The prize of £10 in the first "Dayton" Competition has been awarded to Mr. Lewis Yelland, 84 Arabella Street, Roath, Cardiff.

The prize of £10 in the second "Dayton" competition has been awarded to Mr. W. N. Quarrington, 14 Poet's Corner, Margate.

**Your Editor.**

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### Often Impossible.

HE: "Don't you think it wrong for people to marry their intellectual inferiors?" She: "Yes—always wrong, and in some cases quite impossible."

### Not Very Complimentary.

CHOLLIE: "Would you believe it that I was threatened with serious brain trouble when I was young?" Dollie: "Indeed? How did you succeed in having it removed?"

### Glad it Was Over.

HE (preparing to leave): "I assure you, Miss Sweet, the time has passed very pleasantly this evening." She (abstractedly): "Yes, it is pleasant to know that it is past."

### Where She Was Kissed.

LAWYER: "Where did he kiss you?" Pretty Defendant: "On the mouth, sir." Lawyer: "No, no! you don't understand. I mean where were you?" Defendant (blushing): "In his arms, sir."

### Papa Wouldn't Like It.

"IF you do not marry me I shall hang myself!" exclaimed a lovelorn young man. "Well, if you do, please go away a few streets," was the cheerful response, "for I heard papa say he did not want you to hang round here."

### Character from the Pencil.

"I ALWAYS like to write with a soft lead-pencil," remarked the young man. "Have you ever given any study," inquired the cruelly thoughtless girl, "to the manner in which a person's character will manifest itself in his handwriting?"

### Worth an Extra Shilling.

MR. GREEN (to Johnny, who has been hiding behind the screen): "There, I'll give you a shilling not to tell that I kissed your sister!" Johnny: "Yes, but I saw you put your arm round her waist a-cuddlin' of her. It's worth another bob not to split on that."

### The Day Hadn't Come.

DESPAIRING LOVER: "Bertha, have you nothing to say in answer to the letter I wrote you last Thursday? Do you know that all my future is bound up in your reply to that letter?" Fair Maiden: "I haven't looked at it, Horace. Next Tuesday is my day for opening sealed proposals."

### A Sister's Duties.

MISS MITTENS: "What does this mean, Mr. Brotherton?" Mr. Brotherton: "These? Oh, these are just a few socks, underclothes, and coats that want mending!" Miss Mittens: "But——?" Mr. Brotherton: "You promised to be a sister to me last night, you know; and my sister used to do all my mending before she was married."

### Why She Did It.

"THAT'S a very clever idea of yours, Miss Nellie." "What is a very clever idea, Mr. Dolley?" "Wearing a big hat at the theatre and exasperating everybody in your rear until the curtain rises, and then relieving their anxiety by taking it off and placing it on your lap." "Yes; I know; it is a good plan. It attracts the attention both to my hat and to my hair."

### Thought Too Much of Her.

ETHEL: "Are you sure that all his thoughts are of you?" Edith: "Oh, yes! Why, he has just lost his position on account of inattention to business!"

### Cutting the Rough Diamond.

MILLIE: "Why do you never speak to Mr. Marples now? He is uncouth, but I feel sure he is a diamond in the rough." Clara: "So do I. That's why I'm cutting him."

### The Taste of a Kiss.

"OH, Sophie! I hear you kissed Mr. Rondo, the poet, in the conservatory last night." "Um-m-m!" "Tell me. What was it like?" "Well, he has a very pronounced literary taste."

### Such a Surprise!

"I'VE planned such a delightful surprise for my husband." "Really?" "Yes. He has a spring suit nearly as good as new hanging in the wardrobe, and I've put a shilling in one of the waistcoat pockets."

### Kept the Men off.

MAUD: "Why has Lilian given up wearing rational costume? Did George object?" Ethel: "Oh, no; he said he approved of it, because it would prevent her attracting any other man's admiration."

### Not as He Meant It.

HE knew what they always say, so he thought he would forestall her. "I suppose you've never been kissed by a man before?" he said. "Do I look as plain as all that?" she demanded haughtily.

### Wanted Him to be Thinner.

MAUD: "Why did you break your engagement with poor Tom Hotchkiss?" Edith: "Hush, don't tell anyone, but he was growing so horribly fat. When grief has pulled him down a bit I shall take him on again."

### Couldn't Run any Risks.

MOTHER (reading): "An inventor has just patented a machine that will toss a man 500 feet into the air by simply touching a spring." Pretty Daughter: "Goodness gracious! Let me destroy that paper before papa gets hold of it."

### Giving a Gentle Hint.

"I HAVEN'T anything new to sing to you to-night, George." "Well give me something old, then." She broke into a refrain that was "a song of the day" seventeen years before. "That's very, very old, Clara," he remarked at the close. "Yes, George; I sang that to you the night we became engaged."

### The Postscript Wasn't Meant.

SHE was a smart and pretty girl, and part of her duties was to write the advertisements for a large drapery establishment in the City. Her mind used to run so much upon her business that one day, when she wrote to her lover to meet her that night at home, she unconsciously added as a postscript: "Come early and avoid the rush."

### She Had Inherited It.

WOULD-BE SUITOR: "Is it possible that you have never attended a dancing class?" Young Lady: "Never in my life." "Remarkable! Why, you dance charmingly; how do you account for it?" "I must have inherited it. Papa is an adept in manipulating the light, fantastic toe." "What evening did you say he wouldn't be at home?"

### Flattery Won the Day.

HE kissed her boldly in the open street. "Sir!" she shrieked, "you are an utter stranger to me. What means this familiarity?" "Madam," he replied, bowing low, "though we never met before, you must excuse me. I bet my friend that I would kiss the prettiest girl I saw in the whole street." A soft, forgiving smile replaced her wrathful glance. "You are forgiven this time," she said sweetly, "but please don't let it occur again."

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OUR SPLENDID SERIAL.

# THE ALBERT GATE MYSTERY.

## *A Romance of To-day.*

By LOUIS TRACY.

*Author of "The Final War," "The Lost Lady Delia," etc.*

### Fairholme's Mission.

"The third item," continued Brett, "which demands attention in Paris is the whereabouts of the Turks. They must be found and observed. My chief difficulty will be to keep that delightful commissary from imprisoning them, if, as I imagine, we find the little thief a captive in the Rue Barbette. So you see my actions are speculative. Yours, on the other hand, will be definite."

"Ah," said Fairholme, "I am glad to hear that. If you expect me to analyse and deduce and find out the probable movements of intelligent rascals, I am sure I should make a mess of things."

"You will reach London," said Brett, "at 7.30 p.m. I suppose you have in your service a reliable servant, endowed with a fair amount of physical strength?"

"Rather," cried the Earl. "My butler is a splendid chap. He has been fined half-a-dozen times for his exceeding willingness to settle disputes with his fists."

"Telegraph to him to meet you at Charing Cross Station. I can depend upon my man Smith to use his nerve and discretion. Moreover, he knows Inspector Winter, of Scotland Yard, and should trouble arise, which I do not anticipate, this acquaintance may be useful to you. The third person who will meet you will be the ex-sergeant of police, whose report to me you heard yesterday. He will point out to you the flat tenanted by the invalid lady. You speak French well, and after a few questions you should be able to satisfy yourself whether or not the person who opens the door to you when you visit that flat is acting a genuine part. You can pretend what you like, but if admission is denied to you I want you to force your way inside and see that invalid lady at all costs. In the event of a gross mistake having been committed you must apologise most abjectly and assuage the wounded feelings of the servants with a liberal donation, whilst the ex-sergeant of police will advise you as to any other place which may demand personal inspection. I do not conceal from you the difficulties of your task, or the chance that you may get into trouble with the police. But the fact remains that Talbot, alive or dead, is concealed somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Carlton Hotel, and it is high time that this portion of the mystery attending his disappearance should be made clear. Do you follow me?"

"Precisely," said Fairholme. "My programme appears to be very simple. I am to kick down any door that is pointed out by the ex-policeman provided I am refused admission by fair means."

Brett laughed. "I think," he cried, "you have put my instructions in very direct and succinct form. All I hope is that the invalid lady may prove to be an elderly fraud. It only remains for me to give you my blessing and say good-bye."

"But what about you?" said the Earl anxiously. "Suppose we come across Talbot to-night, as you anticipate, where shall I find you to-morrow?"

"You must telegraph to me here," was the answer, "and you must possess your soul in patience until you hear from me."

"No, don't protest," he went on, as Fairholme gave indications of impatience. "You need not fear that you will be left out of the denouement, whatever it be. I am sure to need your help before long, and I will cable you at the first possible moment. For that reason, should you leave your house for more than an hour or so, I hope you will make special arrangements for telegrams to reach you without delay."

"You may rely on that," was the hearty answer. "But look here, Brett. It is 10.45 a.m. now. If I have to catch that eleven-fifty train from the Gare du Nord I have no time to lose. By the way," he added, turning at the door, "is there any reason why I should not wire to Edith to expect me to-night?"

"Not the slightest," said Brett, smiling, "except perhaps this, that instead of calling upon Miss Talbot this evening you may be locked up on the charge of housebreaking."

"Um," said the Earl, thoughtfully, "I had not thought of that. It will be more fun to take her by surprise. So here goes to get my traps packed."

After Lord Fairholme's departure, Brett took matters easily. He did not put in an appearance at the Prefecture until late in the afternoon, and, as he surmised, the commissary whom he encountered the previous night had even then only just arrived at his office. Without any difficulty, the barrister was introduced to the official, who evidently awaited an explanation of the visit with great curiosity.

Brett's ill-humour at the uncalled-for interference of the police was now quite dispelled, and he greeted the commissary with the genial affability which so quickly won him the friendship of casual acquaintances.

"I think," he began, "that your agents, monsieur, were watching me throughout the whole of yesterday."

"That is so," nodded the other, wondering what pitfall lay behind this leading question.

"Do I take it that after my departure from No. 11 Rue Barbette about mid-day they maintained no further guard upon that house?"

"Assuredly. It was monsieur's personal movements which called for observation."

"Then you do not know that an individual whose identity may be much more important than mine to the inquiry upon which we are mutually engaged, is an

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inmate of the apartment at this moment—probably a captive against his will, possibly dead?"

The Frenchman's huge moustache bristled with alarm and annoyance.

"It is a strange thing, monsieur," he cried, "that an English gentleman should come to Paris and know more about the movements and haunts of criminals than the French police."

It was no part of Brett's design to rub the official the wrong way, so he said gently:

"Your remark is quite justifiable, and under ordinary circumstances any such pretence on my part would be ridiculous. But you must remember, monsieur, that I came here from London possessed of special information which was not known even to the police authorities in that city. I am working solely in the private interest of persons high in English society, and it would not serve the purpose of any of the Governments concerned were too much stress publicly laid upon their connection with this mystery. If I can succeed in elucidating the problem it will be a comparatively easy matter for the police to bring the real criminals to justice. As a step towards that end I have come to you now to place you in possession of a clue which may reveal itself in the Rue Barbette. All I ask is, in the first instance, that the affair may be conducted with the utmost secresy, and, secondly, that you will permit me to be present when you examine the person whom I expect to find there. I may be able to help you very materially in your questions, provided the man is alive and well."

The commissary was soothed. The barrister's judicial reference to the importance and confidential nature of the inquiry raised in his mind a dazzling vision of personal distinction and preferment.

"The matter shall be conducted with the utmost discretion," he cried. "What force does monsieur consider to be requisite in order to examine this house thoroughly, and prevent the attempted escape of others whom we may find there in addition to the man described?"

Brett with difficulty repressed a smile. "I do not think that a large force of police will be necessary. If you yourself, monsieur, and another officer will accompany me in a cab, I am sure we will be able to deal with all possible opposition. There is no exit from the flat save through the main door, and the apartment is situated on the second storey, so that escape by way of the windows is practically impossible if we act with promptitude."

The commissary could not reach the Rue Barbette too rapidly. He bundled a subordinate into a fiacre, and the three were driven off at breakneck speed.

They stopped the vehicle at the corner of the street and walked quietly to the house, attracting no attention, as neither of the Frenchmen were in uniform.

Inquiry from the concierge elicited information that none of the occupants of the flat tenanted by the Turkish gentlemen had put in an appearance since the previous afternoon. So the trio mounted the staircase, and without any preliminary summons the junior official applied his shoulder to the door.

The lock yielded quite readily. Indeed, the damage done by Lord Fairholme had been but temporarily repaired, and no special precaution had been taken to fasten the place. All was quiet within. The first room they searched was empty. So was the second; but in a bedroom, the door of which was locked and required forcible treatment, an extraordinary sight met their eyes.

## The Invalid "Lady."

STRETCHED on the bed, gagged and securely tied, was the figure of the diminutive Frenchman, who, little more than twenty-four hours earlier, had so coolly suggested that Brett should be murdered.

Stout leather thongs were fastened to his wrists and ankles and then tied to the four uprights of the bed. His arms and legs were consequently stretched widely apart, and the only sign of vitality about the man was the terrible expression of fear and hate in his eyes as he looked at them.

The gag stuffed in his mouth prevented him from uttering the slightest coherent sound, whilst the agony of his frame, owing to the position in which he lay, joined to the exhaustion induced by terror and want of food, rendered him a pitiable object.

They removed the gag and cut the bonds. The poor wretch remained on his back unable to move, though he flinched somewhat when the police, as gently as possible, loosened the leather straps from his wrists and ankles, for his useless struggles had caused the thongs to cut deeply into his skin.

Brett was the first to realise the unfortunate wretch's chief requirement. He procured some water, raised the man's head, and allowed him to take a deep and invigorating draught.

"Why, it is 'The Worm!'" said the junior policeman. "I know him well. He is a pickpocket, an expert rascal in his line, but hardly up to the standard of great events."

At the sound of his nickname a flicker of intelligence came into the little thief's eyes, but he was still dazed, and did not recognise his rescuers.

"I don't care what you do with me," he murmured at last, in a weak and cracked voice. "Kill me quietly if you want to, but don't tie me up again. I have done nothing to deserve it. I really haven't. I have been acting quite square in this business." And then he broke down and whimpered further protestations of innocence.

"He is weak from want of food, and dazed with terror," said Brett quietly. "I suggest that one of you should get him some meat and wine, whilst the others remain here and endeavour to reassure him. In half an hour he will be greatly recovered. Meanwhile we might examine the place."

The commissary thought Brett's suggestion a good one. His assistant summoned the concierge and attended to the wants of "The Worm," whilst Brett and the commissary conducted a careful scrutiny of the premises.

They found little, however, beyond a considerable accumulation of dirt, for the ways of Turks are primitive and their habits unpleasant in European households. It was evident that before taking their departure the occupants of the flat had carefully removed or destroyed all documents or other articles which might throw light upon their proceedings.

The leather thongs which had bound the prisoner evoked some comment from the barrister.

"These are somewhat unusual articles," he said to the commissary. "You will notice that they are cut from raw cowhide and well stretched. In other words, they are the familiar 'bow-strings' of Constantinople, and warranted not to yield if twisted round the neck. I think they will answer for other purposes than tying people on beds."

"We must find these Turks," said the commissary. "They are desperate characters."

"Find them by all means," said Brett earnestly, "but upon no account arrest them."

"And why, monsieur?" cried the other, with elevated eyebrows.

"Because if you do you will paralyse our future actions. When all is said and done, the only charge you can bring against them is a trivial one. It is evident they merely tied up this man, either with the object of frightening him into a confession, or to leave their hands free whilst they dealt with his employers. Perhaps they had both objects in view. In either event the appearance of the police upon the scene would close their

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mouths more tightly than an oyster. As it is, I expect they will return, and, if possible, you must compel the concierge to conceal the fact that you have visited the house. Let him put all the blame on me. They know that I am mixed up in the inquiry, and fear me far less than the recognised authorities. Oblige me in this respect and you will not regret it."

The policeman was wise enough to fall in with the suggestion.

An hour later "The Worm" was taken in a cab to the Prefecture, as his condition was yet so hopeless that little real benefit could ensue from a searching cross-examination.

So Brett parted company with the officials, having made an appointment with the commissary for the next day at noon, when they assumed that the prisoner would be considerably recovered from his weakness and fright.

The barrister subsequently made a round of the minor cafés in the neighbourhood of the Cirque d'Hiver. After much casual questioning, he elicited the information that a well-known circus, of which Mlle. Beaucaire was at one time a shining light, was performing at that moment at Marseilles. He ascertained that during the winter season this class of entertainment perambulated the South of France and Northern Italy.

The actor from whom he gleaned these important facts said that he had a trustworthy friend in Marseilles who would easily be able to ascertain whether or not La Belle Chasseuse intended to rejoin her former profession. Brett secured his hearty co-operation by a liberal donation for expenses.

The barrister resolved to pay another visit to the Cabaret Noir late that evening, but he waited in the hotel until nearly ten o'clock in anxious expectation of a telegram from Fairholme.

At last the message arrived. Its contents were laconic.

"Right first time," it ran. "Invalid lady's name 'Jack.' Somewhat exhausted after long confinement. Edith delighted. Jack visits Under-Secretary to-night. We all purpose joining you in Paris to-morrow. Do you approve?"

Brett promptly wired "Yes," and then set out for Montmartre dressing himself in the height of fashion so far as his wardrobe would permit, and donning a fierce moustache and wig, which completely altered his appearance. He looked like a successful impresario or popular Italian tenor.

### The Innkeeper.

The fair-ground of Montmartre was in full swing when Brett arrived there. The Cabaret Noir was in charge of his former acquaintance, the weary-eyed waiter, and other assistants.

The barrister wondered whether Mlle. Beaucaire had taken her father completely into her confidence. To make certain he questioned the waiter.

"Is Monsieur Beaucaire in?" he said.

"But yes, monsieur. You will find him in the billiard-room."

This time Brett was not conducted through the private passage that led through the rear of the bar. The man politely indicated another entrance, and brought him to the proprietor with the introductory remark:

"A gentleman who wishes to see you."

The room was tenanted by a nondescript crowd, whose attention was promptly diverted upon the appearance of a stranger, and a well-dressed one at that.

The games in progress at the two tables were momentarily suspended, whilst Gros Jean, a corpulent man above the middle height, whose legs seemed to be too frail to support his rotund body, advanced towards the door, peering curiously beneath his bushy eyebrows to get a glimpse of the new comer, for the shaded light did not fall on Brett's features, and M. Beaucaire wondered who the stranger could be. The barrister almost started when he recognised his fellow-passenger, the man who travelled to Paris with Gaultier and himself. Gros Jean bowed politely enough, and murmured something about being at Brett's service.

"Oh, it is nothing of great importance," said the barrister airily, as he was not anxious to attract too much observation from the unwashed humanity who took such interest in him. "I merely wish to know when it will be convenient for me to have some conversation with mademoiselle, your charming daughter?"

"May I inquire the reason, monsieur?" said the other.

"Certainly. I have heard of her skill as an artist, and it is possible that I might be able to arrange a London engagement for her."

"Ah," said the landlord deprecatingly, "what a pity! Had monsieur called here yesterday he could have seen mademoiselle. She has now left Paris for some weeks."

"Perhaps," said Brett, "I may have the pleasure of meeting her elsewhere. I myself depart to-morrow on a tour to the South of France. It is possible that mademoiselle may be employed in some of the southern cities. If so I will certainly make it my business to call upon her."

Beaucaire came a step nearer. Clearly he did not recall the barrister's face. He well knew that his daughter's attainments were not such as to command the eager search of London theatrical managers, yet he was assured that the individual who now addressed him was not an ordinary music-hall agent, hunting up fees.

He lowered his voice, after an angry glance at the loungers in the room, which caused them to turn to the tables with redoubled interest.

"I regret," he said, "that mademoiselle is not professionally engaged at this moment. Indeed, she has not appeared in public for some months. May I ask how monsieur came to hear of her name?"

"It is the easiest matter in the world," said Brett with his ready smile, producing his note-book and rapidly turning over the leaves. "I have here the names and addresses of a large number of artists whom I was recommended to call upon. Mademoiselle's name was given to me among others at the Cirque d'Hiver, where I heard most encouraging accounts of her skill. You see, monsieur," he went on, "that in England the public are not acquainted with any other language than their own, and when Continental artists are engaged we prefer those whose performance consists chiefly of acrobatic or other feats in which dialogue is unnecessary."

The barrister's ready explanation was sufficient. Nevertheless Beaucaire was puzzled. But even the most vulgar or brutal Frenchman is endowed with a certain amount of politeness, and in this instance Gros Jean felt that his visitor should certainly be treated with great deference.

"I am most sorry," he cried, "to be unable to assist monsieur any further. If, however, you will leave me your address I will communicate with you after I have

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heard from my daughter. I have no doubt that she will readily come to terms."

"I think you said that mademoiselle was in the South of France?" observed Brett casually.

Instantly Beaucaire became suspicious again.

"No," he replied shortly; "I do not think I said so."

"Of course not," laughed Brett. "How foolish of me! It was I who mentioned the South of France, was it not? You see that French is a foreign language to me, and I do not express myself very easily."

Beaucaire grinned politely again, and said: "Permit me to congratulate monsieur upon both his pronunciation and facility. Few Englishmen speak French so well."

The barrister was determined not to allow the conversation to end too rapidly. He wished to note more carefully the details of this interesting household. Pulling out his cigar-case, he offered it to Gros Jean with the remark: "Your small French tables seem curious to my eyes after long acquaintance with English billiards. Are any of these gentlemen here skilled players in your fashion?"

"Oh, yes," said the innkeeper. "André there, for instance, can make big breaks. I have seen him make forty consecutive coups. Will you not take a seat for a little while and observe the play?"

"With pleasure." And Brett confirmed the favourable opinion formed of him by ordering refreshments for Beaucaire and himself and inviting the redoubtable André to join them.

He apparently took a keen interest in the game, and applauded the manner in which the Frenchman scored a series of difficult cannons.

Meanwhile he noted that between the private passage from the bar and the public one that led from the café was a room into which the light of day could not possibly penetrate. He was certain that no door communicated with it from the public passage, and he could not remember having passed one that first afternoon when La Belle Chasseuse brought him and Fairholme into the billiard-room to display her prowess as a markswoman.

It was certainly a curious apartment, and for some undefinable reason he could not prevent his mind from running upon its possible uses.

Probably the Café Noir had no cellars. The place might serve as a store room. This natural hypothesis was upset by the appearance of the waiter, who passed through the billiard-room and opened another door at the further end, through which he soon emerged, carrying a fresh supply of bottles.

"It is obvious," said Brett to himself, "that if there is no door communicating with the private passage, then the only way in which that room can be reached is by a ladder from the top. Now I wonder why that should be necessary?"

He remained in the billiard-room some twenty minutes. When Gros Jean was called on some momentary errand to the front of the house he took his departure, purposely making the mistake of quitting the room by the wrong exit. At the same instant he struck a match to relight his cigar, and while the expert billiard player, André, ran after him to direct him as to the right way he rapidly surveyed the passage. The plaster walls were smooth and unbroken on their inner side, affording no doorway exit.

Apologising to André with a laugh, he then sauntered towards the front café, where he purchased another drink at the counter. He assured himself that he had not been mistaken. The only private door out of the bar led into the passage, so that the room beyond might be regarded as an above-ground cellar, which could only be reached by a staircase through a trap-door.

"I have learnt something at any rate," he murmured as he passed out into the Boulevard, "and I imagine that my knowledge is not shared by the Paris police. Mademoiselle would have acted more wisely had she not


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At length I began to feel so ill that I thought I should have to cancel my engagements altogether, which, naturally, would have been a great loss to me.

"One day a friend of mine, knowing how much I suffered from biliousness, gave me a few Bile Beans, and recommended me to give them a fair trial. I found they did me so much good that I sent for a box, and as a result of taking them the biliousness gradually decreased. I took the Beans regularly for a time, and whenever the sickness came over me I slipped a Bean—I carried them loose in my pocket—into my mouth. They always had the effect of completely clearing my head. I continued with their use and am now entirely free from biliousness and headache and the other sensations from which I suffered so much. I am now in capital health and feel very grateful to the proprietors of Bile Beans."

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yielded to impulse, and reserved her shooting display for a more dramatic occasion."

### A Confession.

The next morning Brett kept his appointment with the commissary. That worthy official set himself to the congenial task of examining a prisoner with the air of one who said: "Now you will see what manner of man I am. Here I am on my native heath."

He consulted bulky volumes, made notes, fussily called up various subordinates, both in person and by speaking-tube, and generally conducted himself with a business-like manner that much amused the barrister, who, however, for his own purposes took care to appear greatly impressed.

At last all was ready, and the captive of the Rue Barbette was introduced.

This precocious personage had recovered his self-possession and natural impudence during the night. By the commissary's instructions he had been well supplied with eatables, and the restrictions as to persons under detention were so relaxed as to permit him to enjoy a supply of his much-loved cigarettes. Consequently, the little thief was restored to his usual state of jaunty cheekiness.

The first part of the interrogation, which promptly ensued, was not strange to him.

"Your name?" said the commissary.

"Charles Petit."

"Age?"

"Believed to be twenty-seven, but as no record was kept of my birth I cannot be certain."

"Abode?"

"Changeable. Of late I have dwelt in the Cabaret Noir, Boulevard de Montmartre."

"You are generally known as 'The Worm?'"

"That is so."

"You have served several periods of imprisonment, and have paid over 400 francs in fines?"

"I have not kept count, but I suppose it is all written down there." And he jerked his thumb towards the conviction book, which lay on the commissary's desk.

"You are a noted thief and you obtained your nickname by reason of your dexterity in picking locks and climbing through scullery windows?"

"If you say so, monsieur, your words cannot be disputed."

"Very well." The commissary scratched a few lines on a memorandum tablet. Then he suddenly raised his quick eyes and fastened them upon the prisoner with the direct question:

"How came you to be detained in such an extraordinary manner in the house, No. 11 Rue Barbette, yesterday?"

A vacant and stolid expression intended to convey an idea of utter innocence came over "The Worm's" face.

"Believe me, monsieur," he said, "I cannot give you the slightest explanation of that extraordinary incident."

"Indeed! You surprise me. I suppose you wish me to understand that you casually strolled in out of the street and were set upon by three Turks, who gagged you and bound you with leather thongs, leaving you to starve quietly to death if you had not been rescued by reason of a chance visit paid to the place by myself and others?"

"I assure you, monsieur, that, strange as it may seem, you have almost related the facts. I went to the place in question with a very ordinary message from a Turkish gentleman with whom I had a slight acquaintance. The other Turks listened to me with the gravity peculiar to their nation, and then, before I could offer a word of remonstrance, treated me exactly as you saw."

"At what time did you go there?"

"It must have been nearly three o'clock, the day before yesterday," was the answer.

"And what message did you bring?"

"I was told to ask the Turkish gentlemen to be good enough to cross the Pont Neuf exactly at half-past six, when they could meet a friend who desired to give some information to them."

"Oh! come now," said the commissary, with a knowing smile, "that will not do, Petit. You are far too old a hand to convey such a childish message as that. What reason can you have for seeking to shield these men who treated you in a barbarous way and left you to die a cruel death?"

"On my honour——" began the thief melodramatically, but Brett here interrupted the conversation.

"Will you allow me," he said to the commissary, "to put a few questions to this man?"

"Certainly," was the answer.

"Now listen," said Brett, sternly gazing at the truculent little rascal with those searching eyes of his, which seemed to reach to the very spine. "It is useless for you to attempt any further prevarication. We know exactly who are your confederates. We are acquainted with a large number of the gang that frequents the Cabaret Noir. Do not forget that I was present when you tried to palm off on Hussein ul Mulk the false diamonds, which your confederates hoped he would accept. For you to attempt now to escape from the law is hopeless. The sole chance you have of remitting a punishment which may even lead you beneath the guillotine, is to confess fully and freely all that you know concerning the outrage which has been committed.

"No, don't interrupt me," he continued with even greater emphasis, when "Le Ver" tried to break in upon his remarks. "You will tell me that you merely acted as the agent of others, and that you yourself are not conscious of the nature of any crime that has been committed. I know that to be so. You have been made a mere tool. You are the cat, simply employed by the monkey to pull the chestnuts out of the fire, and you have only succeeded in getting your own paws burnt. Your sole chance for safety now is to inform the commissary and me exactly how you came to be mixed up with this affair."

The Frenchman's truculency seemed to vanish under Brett's cutting words. His wizened face even manifested a faint flush of anger as the barrister pointed out how he had been duped by his employers.

Yet the order of his craft was strong in its influence, and he commenced another series of protestations.

"I assure you, gentlemen," he cried, "that with respect to the Turks I have no knowledge whatever of their pursuits or motives. I was present when this English gentleman here was debating with them, and I understood that they even went so far as to use threats against him. My mission was to give to the leaders of the Turks a package which I did not even know contained diamonds, either genuine or false. No one could

(*Continued on page 159.*)

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A reporter recently talked with Prof. Adkin and was asked to invite all readers of this paper who are sick or who are worried by the ills of those dear to them, to write to him for assistance. "Some people have declared," said Prof. Adkin, that my powers are of God, they call me a Divine healer, a man of mysterious powers. This is not so; I cure because I understand nature, because I use the subtle force of nature to build up the system and restore health. But at the same time I believe that the Creator would not have given me the opportunity to make the discoveries I have made or the ability to develop them, if He had not intended that I should use them for the good of humanity. I therefore feel that it is my duty to give the benefit of the science I practice to all who are suffering. I want you to tell your readers that they can write to me in the strictest confidence if they are troubled with any kind of disease, and I will thoroughly diagnose their cases absolutely free of charge and explain by a simple guaranteed home treatment how a complete cure should be effected. I care not how serious their cases, nor how hopeless they may seem, I want them to write to me and let me make them well. I feel that this is my life work."

So great is the sensation wrought in the medical world by the wonderful cures performed by Prof. Adkin, that several professional gentlemen were asked to investigate the cures. Among these gentlemen were Dr. L. B. Hawley and Dr. L. G. Doane, both famous physicians and surgeons. After a thorough and painstaking investigation these eminent physicians were so astounded at the far-reaching powers of Prof. Adkin, and the wonderful efficacy of Vitaopathy that they volunteered to forsake all other ties in life and all other kinds of treatment and devote themselves to assisting Prof. Adkin in his great work for humanity. With the discovery of the Adkin Vitaopathic treatment eminent physicians are generally agreed that the treatment of disease has at last been reduced to an exact science.

In all some 8,000 men and women have been cured by the powers of Prof. Adkin. Some were blind, some were lame, some were deaf, some were paralytics, scarcely able to move, so great was their infirmity. Others were afflicted with Bright's disease, heart disease, consumption, and other so-called incurable diseases. Some were sufferers from kidney trouble, dyspepsia, nervous debility, insomnia, neuralgia, constipation, rheumatism, female troubles, and other similar ills. Some were men and women addicted to drunkenness, morphine, and other evil habits. In all cases Prof. Adkin treats he guarantees a cure. Even those on the brink of the grave, with all hope of recovery gone and despaired of by doctors and friends alike, have been restored to perfect health by the force of Vitaopathy and Prof. Adkin's marvellous skill. And, remarkable as it may seem, distance has made no difference. Those living far away have been cured in the privacy of their own homes, as well as those who have been treated in person. Prof. Adkin asserts that he can cure anyone at any distance as well as though he stood before them.

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be more surprised than myself when the Turkish gentleman produced them."

"Who sent you there with the diamonds?" said Brett.

"Even that I cannot tell you," said Petit. "It was a mere chance affair. I was seated in a café sipping some absinthe when a man asked me if I would execute a small commission for him. He explained that it was to deliver a parcel at a house not five minutes distant, and——"

"I see," interrupted Brett, with the cynical smile which so often disconcerted glib liars like Petit. "It is hopeless to expect you to tell the truth. However, I think I know a way to clear your wits. You must be brought face to face with La Belle Chasseuse. Perhaps when you are confronted with that lady in the room between the café and the billiard saloon of the Cabaret Noir——"

"The Worm" gasped out brokenly:

"Pardon, monsieur! I will tell you everything!"

---

**Henri Dubois.**

THE man's face had absolutely become livid as he listened to the barrister's words.

"Well," Brett said, "tell us now who it was that sent you to the Turks with the diamonds?"

"It was Le Jougleur, Henri Dubois."

"What?" cried the commissary, starting violently. "Henri Dubois! The most expert thief in France! A scoundrel against whom the police have vainly tried for years to secure evidence."

"I know nothing of that, monsieur," said the little man, who seemed to be strangely crestfallen, "but I am telling you the truth this time. It was he who sent me the day before yesterday to the Rue Barbette, and again yesterday, although I was very unwilling to go the second time, because, as this gentleman will tell you, they looked very like murdering me on the first occasion."

"What was the object of your visit yesterday?" said Brett.

"There, monsieur, I have told you the truth, although monsieur the commissary here thinks it was childish. My instructions really were to ask them to meet him on the Pont Neuf at 6.30 p.m., when he said he would explain everything to their satisfaction. But, above all, I was to warn them to beware of the Englishman."

"Then, why should they seize and gag you for conveying such a simple message?" demanded the commissary.

"I cannot tell. I have done them no harm. Believe me, gentlemen both, I have not the slightest idea how these diamonds were obtained, or why there should be such a fuss about them."

"How long have you known Dubois?" said Brett.

"Oh, two years more or less."

"Have you ever been associated with him before?"

"Never, monsieur. My record is there." And he again jerked his thumb towards the volume on the table. "It will tell you that I deal in small affairs. Dubois is an artist. If he found a woman's purse in the street he would return it to her with a bow, if she were rich and handsome—and with some francs added, if she were poor.

"I know little about him," he continued, "except that he is a great man. They say that he once robbed the Bank of France of 200,000 francs!"

"He is a favoured lover of La Belle Chasseuse?" demanded Brett sharply.

"The Worm" recovered his equanimity somewhat at this question. He replied with a smirk: "There are others!"

"I think not," came the quick retort. "No; there are none upon whom mademoiselle bestows such favours. She left Paris with him last night."

"The dickens!" ejaculated the little man.

"Oh, yes; and she has just passed a fortnight with him in London."

"A thousand thunders!" screamed Petit. "Her father told me she was performing in a music-hall at Marseilles."

The barrister had evidently touched a sore point, and "The Worm" was more ready than ever to tell all that he knew about Le Jongleur. But his information amounted to little more of importance. The chief fact had been ascertained, its predominant interest was the identity of the man who had planned and carried out the "Albert-gate outrage."

Brett quickly realised that to question him further was useless. Petit evidently expected to be set at liberty at once. In this however, he was disappointed, for the commissary curtly remanded him to the cells.

Brett, on the other hand, made up his mind that "The Worm" at liberty might be more valuable to him than "The Worm" in gaol. So he asked the commissary, as a favour to himself, to set Petit free, first giving the thief to understand that he owed his release to the barrister's intervention.

This was done, and Le Ver was voluble in his expressions of gratitude.

Brett soon cut these short.

"Here," he said, "are a couple of louis for your immediate necessities. I am living at the Grand Hotel, and I want you to call there each morning at ten o'clock. You will inquire at the office if Mr. Brett has left any message for you. Then if I need your services I will be able to reach you early."

Petit protested that he would serve monsieur most willingly, and soon afterwards the barrister took leave of the commissary, promising that worthy official to keep him fully posted as to further developments, and secure for him, and him only, the ultimate credit of capturing such a noted thief as Dubois on condition that no active interference was made by the police.

During the afternoon Brett received a visit from his actor acquaintance, who brought him a telegram from Marseilles. It read:

"Mlle. Beaucaire has obtained an engagement here at the Palais de Glâce. She makes her first appearance on Monday evening." Brett smiled.

"This is certain," he said to himself. "They left Paris on Thursday night and they probably will not reach Marseilles until Monday. I have plenty of time to hear Talbot's story from his own lips before I take my departure for the South."

An hour later he was seated in his room smoking and reading a magazine when the waiter appeared.

"A lady and three gentlemen wish to see monsieur," he explained.

He rose promptly, and accompanied the man to the foot of the staircase. There, near the elevator, he saw Edith Talbot, Lord Fairholme, and Sir Hubert Fitzjames, whilst with them was a tall, handsome young man, whose face bore a great resemblance to that of the girl.

Edith was the first to catch sight of him.

"Oh, Mr.—Mr. Brett, I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you! Here is my brother!"

"I am indeed glad to see you," said Brett, shaking Talbot's hand heartily.

"Then how shall I find words to explain myself?" was the reply, "for in my case there is joined to the pleasure of making a much-desired acquaintance the knowledge that to your efforts I am indebted for my liberty and possibly for my reputation."

"We have much to say to each other," said the barrister. "I suppose you have secured rooms in the hotel?" he continued, turning to Miss Talbot.

"Oh, yes, everything is settled," she cried. "Please take us all somewhere at once where we can talk quietly."

Brett answered with a smile: "Lord Fairholme and I have a sitting-room which we use in common, and which has already been the scene of many earnest conferences. Let us go there."

*(To be continued.)*

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**Conducted by CYNTHIA.**

*[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.*]*

### *A Point of Etiquette.*

"HENRY" and his wife were staying with some relations some time ago. They had arranged to go out to a concert with one of the latter—his wife's sister. At the last moment, "HENRY'S" wife felt unwell, and did not wish to go to the concert. "HENRY" was placed between leaving his wife on the one hand and neglecting her sister on the other. Who should have the preference?

* * * *

I think the best thing would have been for "HENRY" to have seen the sister to her seat in the concert, and have then returned to his wife. At the end of the concert he could arrange to meet the sister and escort her home. He would thus neglect nobody.

### *A Libelled Lover.*

"JESSE" was for long in love with a girl, until some friends told her things about him which were untrue. He told her the stories were false, but without convincing her, and she left him. Since this he has met another girl who seems to be very fond of him, but he does not feel that he returns her affection. In fact, the first girl was the only one he feels he can love.

* * * *

The first girl, "JESSE," cannot care for you much if she will be so easily led away from you by stories which have been told her by third parties. Have you written to her to prove to her the stories are not true, giving her clear proof, and making her ashamed of herself for crediting them? This is what a maligned man should do. If you have, and she still disbelieves you, then she cannot care for you. Better by far try to return the affection of the second girl.

### *'Twixt Two Suitors.*

How are you to act when you are in love with one man but receiving attentions from another, whose friendship you very much like, but for whom you have no feelings of affection? To tell man No. 2 you do not care for him would hurt his feelings greatly, and although you love man No. 1, he has not proposed, or even hinted at an intention to become engaged to you. This is the position in which "SOPHIE" finds herself.

* * * *

If "SOPHIE" has no love whatever for man No. 2, she should make that perfectly clear to him. It were better he knew it now than waited until a time when the blow would be more severe. Secondly, if man No. 1 really loves her he will keep a sharp look-out on man No. 2, and soon see that he does not get the upper hand in the transaction—that is, if he is a man of ordinary construction. Meanwhile "SOPHIE" had better convey to man No. 1 in as tactful as way a possible the fact that she would much like to become engaged to him.

### *Too Presumptuous.*

"W. J." took a fancy to a girl some time ago, and wrote to her. The letter was inclosed in that of a friend of hers, a device adopted by "W. J." so that the girl's parents should not know of it. Since this she has never showed any wish to become intimate with him. He is to meet her again soon. How should he act to gain her approbation?

* * * *

Is "W. J." sure the girl even cares a little bit for him? Her action rather suggests that she does not return his admiration. Otherwise a girl would not so strongly oppose a letter from a man, provided the letter were not too presumptuous in tone. If "W. J.'s" letter was worded indiscreetly, he owes the girl an apology, and when he meets her again should tender it. If she accepts it, then he should try to prove to her that he is deserving of her respect. Perhaps his mistake is too great eagerness to make the girl his sweetheart without even knowing whether she has taken to him.

### *Bad-Tempered Husbands.*

"B. H." complains of the temper of her husband. Sometimes, she tells me, he behaves like a fiend, at others he is as loving as a man could be. In the former cases he abuses her and almost goes to the length of violence. At other times he brings her presents, and takes her out to amusements. How is this to be explained, and how can a wife act under the circumstances, seeing that her husband is evidently fond of her?

* * * *

It is a position which only too often happens in domestic life. Every man has his bad moments and his good ones. For a single man it matters not a bit, for he has nobody, generally speaking, upon whom to vent his ill-temper. But a married man has his wife, who accordingly suffers. Of course, everything depends on the man. There are so many ways of dealing with them. Some husbands in tempers are best met in meek silence, others fought by an equal display of heat. But the most effective cure is to convey to a man that he is making himself ridiculous.

* * * *

I know one married woman who cured her husband's ill temper by treating his caprices as nothing but a joke. He found he could not anger her at all, and finally gave up the attempt. When he found it coming on, instead of abusing his wife he went out and chopped wood. Perhaps this would act on your own husband. Try it and see.

### *An Old Affair.*

THREE years ago "M. W." and "NELLIE" were sweethearts. Then something happened and they parted, only to see each other at rare intervals. The other day they had a chat, and, while he was talking to her, "M. W." felt as though their relations were the same as of old, and that he could resume his love for her. Do I think it is possible for two people who have been estranged for so long to again become lovers?

* * * *

It is quite possible. There must be something in common between you, which all the quarrels in the world have not finally driven away, as is clear from the fact that you felt your love returning when you chatted with her. If you really feel you could love her again, and wish to resume the relationship, I should cultivate the girl afresh. She may, of course, have altered in her own feelings, but of that you will soon be able to judge.

**Cynthia.**

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# Madame Sarah Bernhardt

**writes:**

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*"(Signed)*

*"Sarah Bernhardt."*

The above is a literal Translation of the original.

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